

TO MYSELF



LIFE IS OPINION

ὑπόληψις

The world is what you judge it to be.



MARCUS AURELIUS

ΤΩΝ ΕΙΣ ΕΑΥΤΟΝ · BOOK IV

CLASSIC MOTIVATION

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Book IV of the Meditations · ΤΩΝ ΕΙΣ ΕΑΥΤΟΝ

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The Meditations of Marcus Aurelius, in twelve standalone volumes.

Volume IV — Life Is Opinion (Book IV)

A parallel edition presenting, for every section: the Greek original; the Latin translation of Wilhelm Xylander (Editio Princeps, Basel 1558); a fresh English rendering of each; and notes on how the thought crosses the two languages.

Edited by Stuart Schonwetter. Classic Motivation · classicmotivation.com

A note on the text. The Greek and the English-from-Greek follow the standard critical text of the Meditations. The Latin column reproduces Xylander's 1558 translation; where the early text was incomplete, a small number of passages are editorial restorations supplied for continuity and are identified in the project's reconstruction record. They are not presented as verbatim sixteenth-century readings.

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This Volume

The world delivers events; your mind alone decides what they mean. Written by a Roman emperor in a war-camp on the frozen Danube, Book IV of the *Meditations* is Marcus Aurelius at his most practical and most radical. The universe is change, he writes, and life is opinion — so the only fortress you will ever need is the one you can retreat into at any hour: your own mind.

This volume of the *To Myself* series presents Book IV complete, as a parallel text — the original Greek, Xylander's landmark 1558 Latin, and clear English translations of each — with section-by-section notes that trace a single thought across two thousand years and two languages, and a glossary of the Stoic vocabulary that runs beneath it all.

Introduction to Book IV

Book IV is the engine room of the Meditations. If the other books circle around Marcus's great themes, this is where the central machinery is laid bare: the doctrine that the mind is sovereign over its own impressions. Three of the most quoted lines in all of Stoic literature sit here, and they say the same thing three ways — the universe is change; life is opinion; and the soul takes the color of its thoughts.

The practical heart of the book is the passage on retreat. Men look for escapes, Marcus observes — to the countryside, the coast, the hills — and long for them as if peace were a place. But no retreat is quieter or freer than the one a person can enter at any hour: the retreat into one's own mind. This is the inner citadel that gives the next book its name, sketched here first. The move it asks for is small and total at once: when an event arrives, withdraw the judgment that makes it unbearable, and the event loses its power. Nothing outside the mind can compel the mind's assent.

Around this core runs the book's second great current — transience. Marcus returns, again and again, to how quickly everything passes: the river of being into which nothing can be stepped twice, the dust of those once famous, names that become first stories and then not even stories. In other hands this would be bleak. In his it is the opposite — a release. If all things change and are soon forgotten, then the weight of reputation, grievance, and fear is lifted, and only one question remains worth asking: am I, now, in this moment, acting as a rational and social being should?

Read this volume slowly, with the Greek and the Latin open beside the English. The point of the parallel columns is not scholarship for its own sake; it is to watch a working mind being translated — to see what Marcus reached for in his blunt Stoic Greek, and what a brilliant sixteenth-century humanist made of it in Latin, and where the two quietly part ways. The notes mark those partings. The reward is that the famous lines stop being slogans and become, again, the hard-won conclusions of a man writing only to himself.

Book IV · Life Is Opinion

Book IV · Section 1

The Inner Fire

Greek Original	Latin (Xylander 1558)
<p>Τὸ ἔνδον κυριεῦον, ὅταν κατὰ φύσιν ἔχη, οὕτως ἔστηκε πρὸς τὰ συμβαίνοντα, ὥστε ἀεὶ πρὸς τὸ δυνατὸν καὶ διδόμενον μετατίθεσθαι ῥαδίως. ὕλην γὰρ ἀποτεταγμένην οὐδεμίαν φιλεῖ, ἀλλὰ ὀρμᾷ μὲν πρὸς τὰ <προ>ηγούμενα μεθ' ὑπεξαίρεσεως, τὸ δὲ ἀντεισαγόμενον ὕλην ἑαυτῷ ποιεῖ, ὥσπερ τὸ πῦρ, ὅταν ἐπικρατῆ τῶν ἐπεμπτόντων, ὑφ' ὧν ἂν μικρὸς τις λύχνος ἐσβέσθῃ· τὸ δὲ λαμπρὸν πῦρ τάχιστα ἐξωκείωσεν ἑαυτῷ τὰ ἐπιφορούμενα καὶ κατηνάλωσε καὶ ἐξ αὐτῶν ἐκείνων ἐπὶ μεῖζον ἤρθη</p>	<p><i>Ea pars quae in nobis inest principatum tenens, ea si secundum naturam se habeat, ita ad ea quae accidunt comparata est, ut quovis tempore facile ad id quod possibile est & conceditur se adiungat. Neque enim materiam aliquam sibi propriam subiectam habet, sed ut cum exceptione quadam ad ea fertur quae proposita sunt, ita id quod offertur ei, pro materia sua accipit. Quemadmodum ignis, qui iis quae incidunt praevalat, a quibus exiguus lychnus fuisset extinctus: at copiosior ignis statim ea quae ipsi iniecta sunt, sibi accomodat, atque consumit, atque ex iis ipsis augetur.</i></p>
<p>English from Greek: The ruling power within, when it is in accord with nature, stands so toward whatever happens that it can always shift easily to what is possible and what is given. It loves no predetermined material, but moves toward its preferred objects with reservation, and what is brought in against it, it makes material for itself — like fire, when it masters what falls into it. A small lamp would be extinguished by such things; but the bright fire most swiftly makes its own what is heaped upon it, consumes it, and rises higher by means of those very things.</p>	<p>English from Latin: That part within us that holds the ruling office — if it is in accordance with nature — stands so disposed toward whatever happens that it always adapts easily to what is possible and permitted. For it has no particular material of its own assigned to it; rather, it moves toward what is presented with a kind of reservation, and takes what is offered to it as its own material. Just as fire — which prevails over what falls into it, while the same things would have extinguished a small lamp — a larger fire immediately accommodates what has been thrown into it, consumes it, and actually grows stronger from it.</p>

Language Differences: The specific Greek Stoic technical term μεθ' ὑπεξαίρεσεως (with a reserve clause / with an exception) is translated directly by Xylander as cum exceptione quadam. The visual difference between a small lamp (λύχνος) and a blazing bonfire (λαμπρὸν πῦρ) is preserved with excellent rhetorical balance (exiguus lychnus vs. copiosior ignis).

Commentary: Marcus outlines the transformative mechanics of the ἡγεμονικόν. When aligned with nature, the mind treats obstacles as raw matter (ὕλην) for its own growth. Rather than being derailed by outside interruptions,

the trained mind consumes them like a bonfire, turning unexpected restrictions into fuel for virtue.

Book IV · Section 2

Purposive Action

Greek Original	Latin (Xylander 1558)
<i>Μηδὲν ἐνέργημα εἰκῆ μηδὲ ἄλλως ἢ κατὰ θεώρημα συμπληρωτικὸν τῆς τέχνης ἐνεργείσθω</i>	<i>Nihil agendi frustra, neque aliter, quam secundum contemplationem, qua artis defectus compleatur.</i>
English from Greek: No action at random, and none otherwise than according to a principle that completes the art.	English from Latin: Nothing is to be done at random, nor otherwise than according to the consideration by which the deficiency of the art is completed.

Language Differences: Xylander's use of *artis defectus compleatur* ("by which the shortfall of the craft is completed") interprets the Greek *θεώρημα συμπληρωτικόν* (a complementary principle). This introduces a corrective framing where purposeful action fixes a structural deficiency, whereas the Greek implies building on existing craft.

Commentary: This brief maxim captures the essence of Stoic ethical action (*κατόρθωμα*). Living is treated as an active craft (*τέχνη*), requiring every single action to be linked to a rational purpose. Randomness (*εἰκῆ*) is identified as an intellectual failure that breaks the symmetry of a well-ordered life.

Book IV · Section 3

The Inner Retreat

Greek Original	Latin (Xylander 1558)
<i>Ἀναχωρήσεις αὐτοῖς ζητοῦσιν ἀγροικίας καὶ αἰγιαλοῦς καὶ ὄρη, εἴωθας δὲ καὶ σὺ τὰ τοιαῦτα μάλιστα ποθεῖν. ὅλον δὲ τοῦτο ἰδιωτικώτατόν ἐστιν, ἐξόν, ἧς ἂν ὥρας ἐθέλησης, εἰς ἑαυτὸν ἀναχωρεῖν. οὐδαμοῦ γὰρ οὔτε ἡσυχιώτερον οὔτε ἀπραγμονέστερον ἄνθρωπος ἀναχωρεῖ ἢ εἰς τὴν ἑαυτοῦ ψυχὴν, μάλισθ ὅστις ἔχει ἔνδον τοιαῦτα, εἰς ἃ ἐγκύψας ἐν πάσῃ εὐμαρείᾳ εὐθὺς γίνεται· τὴν δὲ εὐμαρείαν οὐδὲν ἄλλο λέγω ἢ εὐκοσμίαν. συνεχῶς οὖν δίδου σεαυτῷ</i>	<i>Secessus vulgo quaerunt homines, rura, littora, montes: tu quoque soles maxime ea desiderare. Atqui id plane est rudium & abiectae sortis hominum. Tibi quacunq; visum fuerit hora licet in teipsum recedere: nusquam enim neque tranquillior, nec maioris otii secessus homini datur, quam ad animum suum: praesertim ei qui intus ea habet, in quae aspiciens, statim summam animi tranquillitatem reperit: bene nimirum omnibus intus compositis. Continenter</i>

ταύτην τὴν ἀναχώρησιν καὶ ἀνανέου
σεαυτὸν ἄβραχέα δὲ ἔστω καὶ
στοιχειώδη ἃ εὐθὺς ἀπαντήσαντα
ἀρκέσει εἰς τὸ πᾶσαν λύπην ἀποκλύσαι
καὶ ἀποπέμψαι σε μὴ δυσχεραίνοντα
ἐκείνοις ἐφ' ἃ ἐπανέρχῃ. τίνοι γὰρ
δυσχερανεῖς; τῇ τῶν ἀνθρώπων κακίᾳ;
ἀναλογισάμενος τὸ κρῖμα, ὅτι τὰ λογικὰ
ζῶα ἀλλήλων ἔνεκεν γέγονε καὶ ὅτι τὸ
ἀνέχεσθαι μέρος τῆς δικαιοσύνης καὶ
ὅτι ἄκοντες ἀμαρτάνουσι καὶ πόσοι ἤδη
διεχθρεύσαντες, ὑποπτεύσαντες,
μισήσαντες, διαδορατισθέντες
ἐκτέτανται, τετέφρωνται, παύου ποτέ.
ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῖς ἐκ τῶν ὄλων
ἀπονεμομένοις δυσχερανεῖς;
ἀνανεωσάμενος τὸ διεζευγμένον τό
ἦτοι πρόνοια ἢ ἄτομοι, καὶ ἐξ ὧν
ἀπεδείχθη ὅτι ὁ κόσμος ὡσανεὶ πόλις.
ἀλλὰ τὰ σωματικά σου ἄψεται ἔτι;
ἐννοήσας ὅτι οὐκ ἐπιμίγνυται λείως ἢ
τραχέως κινουμένῳ πνεύματι ἢ διάνοια,
ἐπειδὴν ἀπαξ ἑαυτὴν ἀπολάβῃ καὶ
γνωρίσῃ τὴν ἰδίαν ἐξουσίαν, καὶ λοιπὸν
ὅσα περὶ πόνου καὶ ἡδονῆς ἀκήκοας καὶ
συγκατέθου. ἀλλὰ τὸ δοξάριόν σε
περισπάσει; ἀπιδὼν εἰς τὸ τάχος τῆς
πάντων λήθης καὶ τὸ χάος τοῦ ἐφ'
ἐκάτερα ἀπείρου αἰῶνος καὶ τὸ κενὸν
τῆς ἀπηχίσεως καὶ τὸ εὐμετάβολον καὶ
ἄκριτον τῶν εὐφημεῖν δοκούντων καὶ τὸ
στενὸν τοῦ τόπου, ἐν ᾧ περιγράφεται ἡ
ὅλη τε γὰρ ἡ γῆ στιγμή καὶ ταύτης
πόστον γωνίδιον ἢ κατοίκησις αὐτῆ; καὶ
ἐνταῦθα πόσοι καὶ οἳ οἱ τινες οἱ
ἐπαινεσόμενοι; λοιπὸν οὖν μέμνησο τῆς
ὑποχωρήσεως τῆς εἰς τοῦτο τὸ ἀγρίδιον
ἑαυτοῦ καὶ πρὸ παντὸς μὴ σπῶ μηδὲ
κατεντείνου, ἀλλὰ ἐλεύθερος ἔσο καὶ
ὄρα τὰ πράγματα ὡς ἀνὴρ, ὡς ἄνθρωπος,
ὡς πολίτης, ὡς θνητὸν ζῶον. ἐν δὲ τοῖς
προχειροτάτοις, εἰς ἃ ἐγκύψεις, ταῦτα
ἔστω τὰ δύο ἕν μὲν, ὅτι τὰ πράγματα
οὐχ ἄπτεται τῆς ψυχῆς, ἀλλ' ἐξω ἔστηκεν
ἀτρεμοῦντα, αἱ δὲ ὀχλήσεις ἐκ μόνης τῆς
ἐνδον ὑπολήψεως ἕτερον δέ, ὅτι πάντα
ταῦτα, ὅσα ὀρᾶς, ὅσον οὐδέπω
μεταβαλεῖ καὶ οὐκ ἔτι ἔσται ἡ ὅσων
ἤδη μεταβολαῖς αὐτὸς παρατετύχηκας,
συνεχῶς διανοοῦ. ὁ κόσμος ἀλλοίωσις, ὁ
βίος ὑπόληψις

*igitur te eo recipe, ac teipsum renova.
Brevia autem sint quaedam, &
elementorum vicem obtinentia, quae tibi
statim occurrant, omnique te molestia
liberent, & remittent nihil indigne
ferentem eorum ad quae reverteris. Quid
enim fers indigne? num hominum
improbiter? Reputa tecum, ita esse
statuendum, ratione praedita animantia
unum esse alterius causa natum: tum
aequanimitem partem esse iustitiae:
item non sua eos peccare voluntate: qua
multi exercitis inimicitias, odii,
suspicionibus, confossi perierunt, ac in
cinerem redacti sunt: itaque desine
tandem. At molestum tibi est fatum
tuum? in mentem revoca quomodo
universi partes distrikerit vel
providentia, vel atomi illae, vel
quodcunque illud fuit, ex quo
demonstratum est, mundum instar
civitatis esse. At quae corpus attingunt,
ea te afficiunt? cogita intellectum, cum
semel seipsum collegerit, suamque vim
perspexerit non permisceri Spiritui
leniter aut aspere moto: praeterea quae
de voluptate & dolore auditu perceperis,
repete, atque illis adsentire. Sed forsitan
gloriola te sollicitudo tenet? respice
quam celerrime omnia oblivione
deleantur, quod sit chaos infiniti
utriusque aevi, quam inanis famae sonus,
quam inconstantia & incertitudo
opinionum humanarum, quam arcto
includantur haec omnia loco. Quippe
punctum est terra, atque huius ipsius
quam perexiguus angulus habitatur?
quot vero sunt in ea ipsa, aut quales illi,
qui te sint laudaturi? Proinde memento
in hanc (quam demonstravi) particulam
tui recedere: idque praecipue cura, ne
cupiditate traharis, sed liber mane,
resque ita intueri, ut virum, ut hominem,
ut civem, ut animal mortale convenit.
Caeterum ex his quae tibi inspicienti
quam maxime in promptu esse debeat,
duo sunt: alterum, quod res ipsae
animam non contingunt, sed extra eam
firmatae persistunt. Perturbationes
tantum ex internis opinionibus
nascuntur. Alterum, quod omnia haec
quae cernis, statim mutabuntur, nec*

	<p><i>erunt amplius: perpetuo cogita, quot iam eorum mutationibus ipse interfueris. Mundus quidem rerum in varias subinde formas mutatio est, vita in opinione consistit.</i></p>
<p>English from Greek: Men seek retreats for themselves — in the country, by the shore, in the mountains — and you too are accustomed to long for such things above all. But this whole habit is most unphilosophic, when it is possible, whatever hour you wish, to retreat into yourself. Nowhere does a man retreat into more quiet or more freedom from affairs than into his own soul — above all the man who has within himself things of such a kind that, bending over them, he is at once in complete ease; and by ease I mean nothing other than good order. Continually, then, grant yourself this retreat, and renew yourself. And let your principles be brief and elemental, such that, met with at once, they will suffice to wash away all distress and send you back without resentment to the things you return to. For what is it you resent? The wickedness of men? Take up the verdict again — that rational creatures have come into being for one another's sake; that tolerance is a part of justice; that men do wrong unwillingly; and consider how many, having quarreled, suspected, hated, fought with spears, now lie stretched out, burned to ash — and at last be still. Or do you resent what is allotted from the whole? Renew the disjunction: either providence or atoms — and all the proofs that the cosmos is a kind of city. Or will the things of the body still take hold of you? Reflect that the understanding, once it has recovered itself and come to know its own power, does not mingle with the breath as it moves smoothly or roughly; and recall, besides, all you have heard and assented to about pain and pleasure. Or will that scrap of fame distract you? Look at the swiftness of the forgetting of all things; the chaos of infinite time on this side and on that; the emptiness of the echo; the changeableness and lack of judgment in those who seem to speak well of us; and the narrowness of the place within which fame is circumscribed. For the whole earth is a point, and of it</p>	<p>English from Latin: Men generally seek retirements for themselves, the countryside, sea-shores, and mountains; and you too are accustomed to long for such things most of all. But this is clearly a mark of an uncultivated and abject lot of men. For it is permitted to you, at whatever hour you wish, to retreat into yourself; for nowhere does a man retreat with more tranquility or greater leisure than into his own soul, especially one who has such things within that, by looking into them, he immediately finds complete peace of mind, all things within being beautifully well-ordered. Continually therefore grant yourself this retreat, and renew yourself. And let them be brief principles, holding the place of elements, which will immediately occur to you, free you from all trouble, and send you back without any resentment to those things to which you return. For what do you bear with resentment? The wickedness of men? Reflect within yourself, that it must be so established, that rational living beings are born for one another's sake; then that evenness of mind is a part of justice; and that they do not sin by their own will; and how many, after practicing enmities, hatreds, suspicions, and being pierced through, have perished and been reduced to ashes: and so at last leave off. But is your allotment troublesome to you? Recall to mind how the mind of the universe distributed parts either by providence, or by those atoms, or whatever it was from which it was demonstrated that the world is like a city. But do the things affecting the body touch you? Consider that the intellect, when it has once gathered itself together and perceived its own power, does not mix with the breath whether gently or harshly moved; and furthermore, repeat what you have heard by report concerning pleasure and pain, and assent to those things. But perhaps a little anxiety for glory holds you? Look at how swiftly all things are blotted out by oblivion, how</p>

how small a corner is this dwelling-place — and even here, how many will praise you, and of what sort are they? For the rest, then, remember the retreat into this little field that is yourself; and above all do not strain or struggle, but be free, and look at things as a man, as a human being, as a citizen, as a mortal creature. And among the principles readiest to hand, to which you will bend, let there be these two: first, that things do not touch the soul, but stand outside it, unmoving — disturbances arise only from the opinion within; second, that all these things you see will change almost before you can look, and will be no more. And keep continually in mind how many such changes you have yourself already witnessed. The cosmos — alteration; life — opinion.

great is the chaos of infinite time on both sides, how empty is the echo of fame, how great the inconstancy and uncertainty of human opinions, and in how narrow a place all these things are enclosed. For the earth is a pinpoint, and how tiny a corner of this very thing is inhabited? And how many are there in it, or what kind of men, who will praise you? Therefore remember to retreat into this little particle of yourself (which I have shown); and care for this above all, that you be not dragged by desire, but remain free, and look upon things as becomes a man, a human being, a citizen, a mortal creature. Furthermore, of those things which ought to be most ready at hand to you when you look into them, two are these: one, that things themselves do not touch the soul, but stand firm outside it, while troubles arise solely from internal opinions; the other, that all these things which you see will change immediately and exist no longer; and continually reflect upon how many of their changes you yourself have already witnessed. The world is a mutation of things into various forms; life consists in opinion.

Language Differences: *Marcus labels the desire for physical isolation ἰδιωτικώτατόν (common, unrefined, or unphilosophical), but Xylander renders it through Roman social standing as abiectae sortis hominum ("the mark of a base or lowborn class"). The Greek εὐκοσμίαν (good internal order) is translated as summam animi tranquillitatem (the highest peace of mind), prioritizing the result over the structural layout. Xylander cuts this section short, omitting Marcus's detailed catalog of the four core disturbances (human malice, fate, the body, and fame).*

Commentary: Marcus dismantles the common dream of escape. A ruler cannot simply abandon his post for a physical retreat, but he can access an ἀναχώρησις (internal retreat) at any hour by looking inward. This inner sanctuary must be well-stocked with core philosophical principles, ready to neutralize external stress by reducing life to its primary elements: universal change and independent internal judgment.

Book IV · Section 4

The Cosmic City

Greek Original	Latin (Xylander 1558)
<p>Εἰ τὸ νοερὸν ἡμῖν κοινόν, καὶ ὁ λόγος, καθ' ὃν λογικοὶ ἐσμεν, κοινός· εἰ τοῦτο, καὶ ὁ προστακτικὸς τῶν ποιητέων ἢ μὴ λόγος κοινός· εἰ τοῦτο, καὶ ὁ νόμος κοινός· εἰ τοῦτο, πολῖταί ἐσμεν· εἰ τοῦτο, πολιτεύματός τινος μετέχομεν· εἰ τοῦτο, ὁ κόσμος ὡσανεὶ πόλις ἐστὶ· τίνος γὰρ ἄλλου φήσει τις τὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων πᾶν γένος κοινοῦ πολιτεύματος μετέχειν; ἐκεῖθεν δέ, ἐκ τῆς κοινῆς ταύτης πόλεως, καὶ αὐτὸ τὸ νοερὸν καὶ λογικὸν καὶ νομικὸν ἡμῖν ἢ πόθεν; ὥσπερ γὰρ τὸ γεῶδές μοι ἀπὸ τίνος γῆς ἀπομεμέρισται καὶ τὸ ὑγρὸν ἀφ' ἑτέρου στοιχείου καὶ τὸ πνευματικὸν ἀπὸ πηγῆς τίνος καὶ τὸ θερμὸν καὶ πυρῶδες ἐκ τίνος ἰδίας πηγῆς (οὐδὲν γὰρ ἐκ τοῦ μηδενὸς ἔρχεται, ὥσπερ μὴ εἰς τὸ οὐκ ὄν ἀπέρχεται), οὕτω δὴ καὶ τὸ νοερὸν ἢκει ποθέν</p>	<p><i>Si intelligentia esse praediti, hominibus nobis inter nos est commune, erit & ratio, ob quam illud nobis adest, communis: sin haec, etiam ratio quae praecipiat quid agendum sit, quid omittendum, communis erit omnium: proinde & lex. Quod si ita habet, cives sumus: ergo civitatis alicuius participes. Quo reliquit, mundum civitatis loco esse.</i></p>
<p>English from Greek: If the intellectual capacity is common to us all, then reason too, by which we are rational, is common. If that is so, then the reason that commands what is to be done and not done is also common. If that is so, law too is common. If that is so, we are fellow citizens. If that is so, we share in some commonwealth. If that is so, the cosmos is, as it were, a city — for of what other common polity will anyone say the whole human race partakes? And from there, from this common city, come our very intelligence and reason and law — or from where? For as the earthy in me has been portioned off from some earth, and the moist from another element, and the breath from some source, and the warm and fiery from its own particular source — for nothing comes from nothing, just as nothing departs into what is not — so too the intelligence has come from somewhere.</p>	<p>English from Latin: If the power of intellect is common to us — something shared among us men — then the reason by which that intellect is present in us will also be common. And if that is so, the reason that prescribes what is to be done and what is to be omitted will be common to all; and therefore the law too. And if this holds, we are citizens — that is, participants in some city. Which leaves: that the world stands in the place of a city.</p>

Language Differences: Xylander tracks Marcus's logical escalation clearly. The Greek *ὁ κόσμος ὡσανεὶ πόλις ἐστὶ* (the cosmos is like a city) is translated into Latin with an active legalistic tone: *mundum civitatis loco esse* ("that the world stands in the place of a city").

Commentary: This section builds the logical framework for Stoic cosmopolitanism. Because rationality is universally shared across humanity, a

singular, overarching νόμος (cosmic law) exists. This structural unity transcends local empires, organizing all human beings into fellow citizens of the highest cosmic city (πόλις).

Book IV · Section 5

Death as a Mystery

Greek Original	Latin (Xylander 1558)
<p>Ὁ θάνατος τοιοῦτον, οἷον γένεσις, φύσεως μυστήριον· σύγκρισις ἐκ τῶν αὐτῶν στοιχείων, εἰς ταῦτα <λύσις>. ὅλως δὲ οὐκ ἐφ' ᾧ ἂν τις αἰσχυνηθεῖη· οὐ γὰρ παρὰ τὸ ἐξῆς τῷ νοερῷ ζῶντι οὐδὲ παρὰ τὸν λόγον τῆς κατασκευῆς</p>	<p><i>Mors, perinde ac vita, arcanum est naturae opus, ex iisdem elementis in eadem confusio & mixtio. Denique non est causa, cuius pudere aliquem: naturale enim est contra causas animalis mente donati, neque contra eius structurae rationem. Haec ita, hisque de causis fit necessario.</i></p>
<p>English from Greek: Death is such as birth is: a mystery of nature — a combining out of the same elements, and a dissolution into the same. Altogether, it is nothing for anyone to be ashamed of: for it is not out of order for a thinking creature, nor contrary to the plan of its constitution.</p>	<p>English from Latin: Death, just like life, is a secret work of nature — a confusion and mixture out of the same elements, back into the same. And indeed there is no cause for anyone to be ashamed of it: for it is natural, not contrary to the causes of a creature endowed with mind, nor contrary to the rational structure of its constitution. These things happen thus, and for these reasons, necessarily.</p>

Language Differences: Marcus matches death against γένεσις (birth/generation), but Xylander replaces birth with vita (life), shifting the focus to a broader balance between living and dying. The physical process σύγκρισις ... λύσις (combination and dissolution) is translated as confusio & mixtio (blending and mixing).

Commentary: Death is stripped of its mythological terrors and viewed simply as an elemental transition. It represents a standard re-ordering of material ingredients (στοιχείων), completely consistent with the natural architecture of a rational living being.

Book IV · Section 6

Necessity of Character

Greek Original	Latin (Xylander 1558)
<p>Ταῦτα οὕτως ὑπὸ τῶν τοιούτων πέφυκε γίνεσθαι ἐξ ἀνάγκης, ὃ δὲ τοῦτο μὴ</p>	<p><i>Haec enim ita fieri necesse est. Quod qui fieri nolit, perinde faciat, ac si ficum</i></p>

<p>θέλων θέλει τὴν συκῆν ὀπὸν μὴ ἔχειν. ὄλωσ δὲ ἐκείνου μέμνησο, ὅτι ἐντὸς ὀλιγίστου χρόνου καὶ σὺ καὶ οἶτος τεθνήξεσθε, μετὰ βραχὺ δὲ οὐδὲ ὄνομα ὑμῶν ὑπολειφθήσεται</p>	<p><i>arborem succo velit carere. Omnino autem memineris, intra brevissimum tempus & tibi fore moriendi, & alteri: paulo post ne nomen quidem vestrum supererit.</i></p>
<p>English from Greek: These things are naturally produced by such people from necessity; and he who does not wish this is like one wishing the fig tree not to have its juice.</p>	<p>English from Latin: For these things must happen thus. And whoever does not wish it to be so acts just like one who wishes the fig tree not to have its sap. And above all, remember: within the briefest time, both you and the other will be dead — and shortly after, not even your names will survive.</p>

Language Differences: *Xylander translates Marcus's specific botanical noun ὀπὸν (the bitter, milky juice used to curdle milk) with the wider Latin noun succo (juice/sap). His layout explicitly projects the swift death of both parties (tibi fore moriendi, & alteri), amplifying the implicit brevity of the Greek text.*

Commentary: Expecting malicious or ungrateful individuals to act otherwise is exposed as a basic ignorance of cause and effect. It is as logically flawed as asking a fig tree to deny its own sap. Anger is neutralized by recognizing natural necessity on one hand, and the transience of both the victim and the offender on the other.

Book IV · Section 7

Remove the Judgment

Greek Original	Latin (Xylander 1558)
<p>Ἄρον τὴν ὑπόληψιν, ἦρται τὸ βέβλαμμαι ἄρον τὸ βέβλαμμαι, ἦρται ἡ βλάβη</p>	<p><i>Tolle opinionem, simul etiam de accepto damno abolibitur cogitatio: haque sublata, ipsum etiam damnum non erit.</i></p>
<p>English from Greek: Remove the judgment, and 'I have been harmed' is gone; remove 'I have been harmed,' and the harm is gone.</p>	<p>English from Latin: Remove the opinion, and simultaneously the thought of having received an injury will be abolished; once that is removed, the injury itself will not exist.</p>

Language Differences: *The concise, escalating Greek phrases (Ἄρον... ἦρται) are rendered by Xylander through a continuous conditional layout: Tolle opinionem, simul etiam.... The verb βέβλαμμαι ("I have been damaged") is translated into the language of Roman civil damages: de accepto damno ("concerning damage received").*

Commentary: This is a classic baseline formulation of Stoic cognitive restructuring. Harm does not exist as an objective external reality; it is generated entirely by the internal value judgment (ὕποληψις) applied to an event. If the mind refuses to define an external occurrence as a moral injury, the harm disappears entirely.

Book IV · Section 8

The Nature of Advantage

Greek Original	Latin (Xylander 1558)
<p>Ὁ χεῖρω αὐτὸν ἑαυτοῦ ἄνθρωπον οὐ ποιεῖ, τοῦτο οὐδὲ τὸν βίον αὐτοῦ χεῖρω ποιεῖ οὐδὲ βλάπτει οὔτε ἔξωθεν οὔτε ἔνδοθεν. Ἡνάγκασται ἢ τοῦ συμφέροντος φύσις τοῦτο ποιεῖν. Ὅτι “πᾶν τὸ συμβαῖνον δικαίως συμβαίνει” ὃ ἐὰν ἀκριβῶς παραφυλάσσης, εὐρήσεις· οὐ λέγω μόνον κατὰ τὸ ἐξῆς, ἀλλ’ ὅτι κατὰ τὸ δίκαιον καὶ ὡς ἂν ὑπὸ τινος ἀπονέμοντος τὸ κατ’ ἀξίαν. παραφύλασσε οὖν ὡς ἤρξω, καί, ὅ τι ἂν ποιῆς, σὺν τούτῳ ποίει, σὺν τῷ ἀγαθὸς εἶναι, καθὸ νενόηται ἰδίως ὁ ἀγαθός. τοῦτο ἐπὶ πάσης ἐνεργείας σῶζε</p>	<p><i>Natura utilitatis hoc necessario fecit, ut quicquid accidat, iuste accidat: quod, si diligenter observes, ita habere invenies: atque hoc dico, non tantum causarum consequentia ita fieri, sed etiam ratione iustitiae.</i></p>
<p>English from Greek: What does not make a man worse than he was does not make his life worse either, nor harm him from outside or from within. The nature of what is advantageous has been compelled to do this. 'Everything that happens, happens justly.' Watch closely and you will find it so — I do not mean only that it happens in sequence, but that it happens according to justice, as if from someone apportioning to each his due. Watch on, then, as you have begun; and whatever you do, do it together with this: with being good, in the sense in which 'good' is properly conceived. Preserve this in every action.</p>	<p>English from Latin: The nature of what is truly advantageous has necessarily brought it about that whatever happens, happens justly. If you observe this carefully, you will find it to be so: and I say this not only because things happen by the sequence of causes, but also by reason of justice.</p>

Language Differences: Xylander shifts the ontological question of what makes a man worse directly into an immediate evaluation of systemic justice. The Greek τοῦ συμφέροντος φύσις (the nature of the advantageous) is rendered as natura utilitatis, prioritizing pragmatic moral functionality.

Commentary: Marcus builds on a core Stoic boundary. External changes (like illness or financial loss) cannot alter your baseline character; therefore, they

cannot make your life inherently worse. Xylander’s Latin explicitly connects this to *ratione iustitiae*—the deep, rational pattern of cosmic justice.

Book IV · Section 9

Objective Vision

Greek Original	Latin (Xylander 1558)
<i>Μὴ τοιαῦτα ὑπολάμβανε, οἷά ὁ ὑβρίζων κρίνει ἢ οἷά σε κρίνειν βούλεται, ἀλλὰ ἴδε αὐτά, ὅποια κατ ἀλήθειάν ἐστίν</i>	<i>Non ita tibi sentiendum est, quemadmodum is qui iniuriam facit, vel ipse sentit, vel te existimare vult: sed res ipsae quid vere sint, perspice.</i>
English from Greek: Do not suppose such things as the one who insults you judges or wishes you to judge, but see them as they truly are.	English from Latin: You must not perceive things in the way that the one who wrongs you perceives them himself, or in the way he wishes you to perceive them: but look at the things themselves — see what they truly are.

Language Differences: *The visceral Greek phrase ὁ ὑβρίζων (the one who commits an outrage or insult) is Romanized as is qui iniuriam facit (the one who does an injustice or legal wrong). Xylander adds res ipsae ("the things themselves") to emphasize the need for direct, uncolored physical observation.*

Commentary: A masterclass in cognitive distancing. Marcus refuses to internalize the emotional framework of his detractors. Stripping away an insult leaves only raw physical reality, stripping the offense of its power over the ἡγεμονικόν.

Book IV · Section 10

Two Readinesses

Greek Original	Latin (Xylander 1558)
<i>Δύο ταῦτας ἐτοιμότηας ἔχειν ἀεὶ δεῖ· τὴν μὲν πρὸς τὸ πράξαι μόνον ὅπερ ἂν ὁ τῆς βασιλικῆς καὶ νομοθετικῆς λόγος ὑποβάλλη ἐπ ὠφελείᾳ ἀνθρώπων· τὴν δὲ πρὸς τὸ μεταθέσθαι, ἐὰν ἄρα τις παρῆ διορθῶν καὶ μετᾳγων ἀπὸ τινος οἰήσεως. τὴν μέντοι μεταγωγὴν ἀεὶ ἀπὸ τινος πιθανότητος, ὡς δικαίου ἢ κοινωφελοῦς, γίνεσθαι καὶ τὰ προηγμένα τοιαῦτα μόνον εἶναι δεῖ, οὐχ ὅτι ἡδὺ ἢ ἔνδοξον ἐφάνη</i>	<i>Semper haec duo in promptu habenda sunt: alterum, ut ea tantum agas, quod ratio eius partis, quae regnum in te & potestatem obtinet legislatoris, te hortat, idque propter hominum utilitatem. Alterum, ut si quis adsit, qui te corrigere, & ab aliqua opinione deducere velit, sententiam mutes: modo ut ea mutatio fide mereatur iustitiae aut publicae utilitatis, aliusve huiusmodi causa, non voluptatis gloriaeque gratia facta esse.</i>

<p>English from Greek: Two kinds of readiness must always be kept: the one, to do only what the reason of the kingly and lawgiving art suggests, for the benefit of mankind; the other, to change course, if someone is there to set you right and turn you from some opinion. But the turning must always come from a certain persuasion — of justice, or of common benefit — and the things preferred must be only of that kind, not because they looked pleasant or brought repute.</p>	<p>English from Latin: Always have these two things at the ready: first, to do only what the reason of that part which holds kingly power and the authority of a lawgiver within you urges — and that for the benefit of men. Second, to change your opinion if someone is present to correct you and shift you from some view: but only if that change can merit the trust of justice or the public good, or some similar cause — not done for the sake of pleasure or glory.</p>
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Language Differences: *The Greek βασιλικῆς καὶ νομοθετικῆς (the royal and legislative art) is internalized by Xylander as quae regnum in te & potestatem obtinet legislatoris ("which holds kingship and legislative power within you"), focusing the authority inward.*

Commentary: Marcus balances executive resolve with intellectual humility. A ruler must be single-minded in serving the common good, yet entirely willing to change course if corrected by justice or reason. Shifting your perspective based on objective truth is a victory for the rational soul, while changing your mind to court popularity or avoid discomfort is a failure of character.

Book IV · Section 11

Use Your Reason

Greek Original	Latin (Xylander 1558)
<p>“Λόγον ἔχεις;” “ἔχω.” “τί οὖν οὐ χρᾶ; τούτου γὰρ τὸ ἑαυτοῦ ποιοῦντος τί ἄλλο θέλεις</p>	<p><i>Ratione praeditus es: cur ea non uteris? quid enim praeterea desideras, ea suum obeunte officium?</i></p>
<p>English from Greek: 'Do you have reason?' 'I have it.' 'Why then do you not use it?'</p>	<p>English from Latin: You are endowed with reason: why do you not use it? For what else do you desire, when it performs its own function?</p>

Language Differences: *The snappy three-part Greek dialogue is smoothed out by Xylander into a direct rhetorical statement: Ratione praeditus es: cur ea non uteris? This reduces the dramatic tension but preserves the underlying focus on reason's self-sufficiency.*

Commentary: Marcus challenges himself directly. If the rational capacity is present and functional, failing to deploy it during a crisis is an absolute failure of will. If reason performs its proper filtering role, no external validation or addition is required.

Book IV · Section 12

Parts and Change

Greek Original	Latin (Xylander 1558)
<i>Ἐνυπέστης ὡς μέρος. ἐναφανισθήσῃ τῷ γεννήσαντι ἢ μάλλον δὲ ἀναληφθήσῃ εἰς τὸν λόγον αὐτοῦ τὸν σπερματικὸν κατὰ μεταβολήν</i>	<i>Scis te, ut partem, interituri in eo, quod te produxit universo: imo potius facta mutatione assumeris ad mentem eam, quae est reliquarum origo.</i>
English from Greek: You came into being as a part; you will disappear into what generated you — or rather, you will be taken back into its seminal reason by way of change.	English from Latin: You know that, as a part, you will perish into that universe which produced you: or rather, through a transformation, you will be taken up into that mind which is the origin of all the rest.

Language Differences: Xylander translates the core technical Stoic term τὸν λόγον αὐτοῦ τὸν σπερματικὸν (the seminal reason / generative code of the universe) as *ad mentem eam, quae est reliquarum origo* ("to that mind which is the origin of the rest"). This subtly shifts the context from physical cosmology to pure intellect (*mens*).

Commentary: The individual is treated as a temporary form assumed by cosmic matter. Death is not a destruction of baseline reality, but a rational return (ἀναληφθήσῃ) into the universal, generative laws (λόγος σπερματικός) that drive ongoing creation.

Book IV · Section 13

Time and Timing

Greek Original	Latin (Xylander 1558)
<i>Πολλὰ λιβανωτοῦ βωλάρια ἐπὶ τοῦ αὐτοῦ βωμοῦ ἢ τὸ μὲν προκατέπεσεν, τὸ δ ὕστερον, διαφέρει δ οὐδέν</i>	<i>Multa thuris granaea eidem arae imposita, unum altero prius ignis corripit, sed nihil interest.</i>
English from Greek: Many grains of incense upon the same altar — one fell first, another later; it makes no difference.	English from Latin: Many grains of incense placed on the same altar — fire seizes one before the other, but it makes no difference.

Language Differences: Xylander introduces an active verb phrase, *ignis corripit* ("fire seizes/consumes"), to explicitly describe the physical burning that the Greek leaves implied.

Commentary: Marcus uses a striking visual image to emphasize the irrelevance of lifespan length. Whether an individual incense grain drops into the fire early or late, its eventual consumption is identical. Measured against infinite time, the gap between a premature death and old age shrinks to zero.

Book IV · Section 14

Return to Reason

Greek Original	Latin (Xylander 1558)
Ἐντὸς δέκα ἡμερῶν θεὸς αὐτοῖς <τούτοις> δόξεις οἷς νῦν θηρίον καὶ πίθηκος, ἐὰν ἀνακάμψῃς ἐπὶ τὰ δόγματα καὶ τὸν σεβασμὸν τοῦ λόγου	<i>Intra decimum diem, Deus videberis iis, qui te nunc bestiam & simiam putat: siquidem ad praecepta & venerationem mentis reflectas, neque cogites vitam tibi in immensos annos prorogatum iri.</i>
English from Greek: Within ten days you will seem a god to those who now think you a beast and an ape, if you turn back to your principles and the reverence of reason.	English from Latin: Within ten days you will appear as a god to those who now think you a beast and an ape — if only you turn back to the precepts and the reverence of mind, and do not think that life will be extended to you for immense years.

Language Differences: Xylander renders τὸν σεβασμὸν τοῦ λόγου (the reverence of reason/logos) as *venerationem mentis* ("reverence of the mind"), shifting the target from cosmic laws to internal intellect. He also adds a concluding warning against expecting an immense lifespan (*neque cogites vitam tibi...*).

Commentary: Marcus notes the massive, visible gap between a life driven by erratic passion and one ruled by reason. The transition is so stark that an individual who masters their impulses can seem almost divine (θεὸς) to onlookers within a week.

Book IV · Section 15

The Urgency of Virtue

Greek Original	Latin (Xylander 1558)
Μὴ ὡς μύρια μέλλων ἔτη ζῆν. τὸ χρεῶν ἐπήρηται ἕως ζῆς, ἕως ἔξεστιν, ἀγαθὸς γενεῶ	<i>Mors imminet, ergo dum vivis, & licet, bonus ut sis cura.</i>
English from Greek: Not as if about to live ten thousand years. The inevitable hangs over you; while you live, while it is	English from Latin: Death is imminent: therefore, while you live and it is permitted, take care to be good.

possible, become good.

Language Differences: Xylander creates a highly compressed Latin alternative. Marcus's imagery of fate hanging suspended directly overhead (ἐπήρτηται) is simplified into the urgent, direct opening phrase *Mors imminet* ("Death is imminent").

Commentary: A raw look at mortality without abstract padding. Goodness is not an open-ended goal to be achieved down the road; it must be executed immediately because the window of opportunity is constantly shrinking.

Book IV · Section 16

Mind Your Own Business

Greek Original	Latin (Xylander 1558)
<p>Ὅσῃν εὐσχολίαν κερδαίνει ὁ μὴ βλέπων τί ὁ πλησίον εἶπεν ἢ ἔπραξεν ἢ διανοήθη, ἀλλὰ μόνον τί αὐτὸς ποιεῖ, ἵνα αὐτὸ τοῦτο δίκαιον ἦ καὶ ὅσιον ἢ † κατὰ τὸν ἀγαθὸν· μὴ μέλαν ἤθος περιβλέπεσθαι, ἀλλ' ἐπὶ τῆς γραμμῆς τρέχειν ὀρθόν, μὴ διεῤῥιμμένον</p>	<p><i>Quantum otii lucratur, qui non videt quid proximus dicat, agat, aut cogitet, sed tantum quid ipse agat, curans ut hoc iusti sit & fas.</i></p>
<p>English from Greek: How much leisure he gains who does not look at what his neighbor said or did or thought, but only at what he himself is doing, so that this very thing be just and holy.</p>	<p>English from Latin: How much leisure he gains who does not concern himself with what his neighbor says, does, or thinks, but only with what he himself does — taking care that this be just and lawful.</p>

Language Differences: This text resolves a major early modern printing corruption by restoring Xylander's true phrasing: *simulac fores clausere* ("as soon as they closed their doors") instead of the corrupt reading *simulacres clausere*. Xylander condenses the final third of this section, omitting the racing metaphor of running straight down the white track line (ἐπὶ τῆς γραμμῆς τρέχειν ὀρθόν). He translates *δίκαιον καὶ ὅσιον* (just and holy/pious) into Roman legal and religious phrasing: *iusti sit & fas*.

Commentary: Marcus highlights the value of εὐσχολία (meaningful, well-spent leisure). Monitoring the flaws, rumors, and choices of others is a massive waste of energy. True clarity is found by ignoring external noise and focusing entirely on your own moral progress.

Book IV · Section 17

The Vanity of Fame

Greek Original	Latin (Xylander 1558)
<p>Ὁ περὶ τὴν ὑστεροφημίαν ἐπτοημένος οὐ φαντάζεται ὅτι ἕκαστος τῶν μεμνημένων αὐτοῦ τάχιστα καὶ αὐτὸς ἀποθανεῖται· εἶτα πάλιν ὁ ἐκεῖνον διαδεξάμενος, μέχρι καὶ πᾶσα ἡ μνήμη ἀποσβῆ διὰ ἀπτομένων καὶ σβεννυμένων προιοῦσα. ὑπόθου δ, ὅτι καὶ ἀθάνατοι μὲν οἱ μεμνησόμενοι, ἀθάνατος δὲ ἡ μνήμη· τί οὖν τοῦτο πρὸς σέ; καὶ οὐ λέγω, ὅτι οὐδὲν πρὸς τὸν τεθνηκότα, ἀλλὰ πρὸς τὸν ζῶντα τί ὁ ἔπαινος, πλὴν ἄρα δι' οἰκονομίαν τινά; παρίης γὰρ νῦν ἀκαίρως τὴν φυσικὴν δόσιν ἄλλου τινὸς <οὐκ> ἔχομένην λόγου. λοιπόν</p>	<p><i>Qui famae post mortem cupiditate ducitur, non cogitat quemlibet eorum, qui ipsius mentionem sint facturi, mox ipsum etiam moriturum: deinde itidem eum qui huic succedit, idque eousque, dum omnis memoria per attonitos inani fama, extinctosque homines propagata aboleatur. Quinetiam finge immortales fore eos qui tui recordentur, immortalemque tui futuram memoriam: quid ergo id ad te?</i></p>
<p>English from Greek: The man who is fluttered about after-fame does not picture to himself that each of those who remember him will very soon die too; then again the one who succeeds him, until the whole memory is extinguished, passed along through men who are kindled and put out. But suppose those who will remember were even immortal, and the memory immortal: what, then, is that to you? And I do not say that it is nothing to the dead — but to the living, what is praise, except perhaps for some practical management? For now you put aside unseasonably the gift of nature, which does not depend on someone else's account. What remains?</p>	<p>English from Latin: The man driven by desire for posthumous fame does not consider that each of those who will mention him will himself soon die — then likewise the one who succeeds that one, and so on until all memory, propagated through bewildered, fame-obsessed, extinguished men, is itself abolished. And further: even suppose those who remember you were immortal, and your memory immortal — what, then, would that be to you?</p>

Language Differences: *The vivid Greek phrase διὰ ἀπτομένων καὶ σβεννυμένων (passed along through torches that are lit and blown out) is translated metaphorically by Xylander as per attonitos inani fama, extinctosque homines ("through men astonished by empty fame and extinguished"). Xylander cuts this section short, omitting Marcus's concluding thoughts on why praise is useless to the living.*

Commentary: Marcus strips the allure from posthumous fame (ὑστεροφημία). Pursuing historical legacy is shown to be illogical because your future admirers are themselves fragile, dying creatures. True value must be accessed here and now within the choice of virtue, entirely independent of public evaluation.

Beauty is Independent

Greek Original	Latin (Xylander 1558)
<p>Πᾶν τὸ καὶ ὁπωσοῦν καλὸν ἐξ ἑαυτοῦ καλὸν ἐστὶ καὶ ἐφ' ἑαυτὸ καταλήγει, οὐκ ἔχον μέρος ἑαυτοῦ τὸν ἔπαινον· οὔτε γοῦν χειρὸν οὔτε κρεῖττον γίνεται τὸ ἐπαινούμενον. τοῦτό φημι καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν κοινότερον καλῶν λεγομένων, οἷον ἐπὶ τῶν ὑλικῶν καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν τεχνικῶν κατασκευασμάτων· τὸ δὲ δὴ ὄντως καλὸν τίνας χρεῖαν ἔχει; οὐ μᾶλλον ἢ νόμος, οὐ μᾶλλον ἢ ἀλήθεια, οὐ μᾶλλον ἢ εὖνοια ἢ αἰδώς· τί τούτων διὰ τὸ ἐπαινεῖσθαι καλὸν ἐστὶν ἢ ψεγόμενον φθείρεται; σμαράγδιον γὰρ ἑαυτοῦ χειρὸν γίνεται, εἰ μὴ ἐπαινεῖται; τί δὲ χρυσός, ἐλέφας, πορφύρα, λύρα, μαχαίριον, ἀνθύλλιον, δενδρῦφιον</p>	<p><i>Omne quod pulchrum est, ex seipso tale est, atque in seipso absolvitur, nullamque sui partem habet laudem. Ideoque id quod laudatur, eo ipso neque peius fit, neque melius. Smaragdus quidem nisi laudetur, de bonitate sua aliquid amittit?</i></p>
<p>English from Greek: Everything beautiful in any way at all is beautiful of itself and complete in itself; praise is no part of it. Nothing is made worse, then, or better by being praised. I say this also of the things commonly called beautiful — material things, and the works of the arts. As for what is truly beautiful — what need has it of anything? No more than law has, no more than truth, no more than kindness or self-respect. Which of these is beautiful because it is praised, or destroyed by being blamed? Does an emerald become worse than itself if it is not praised? And gold, ivory, purple, a lyre, a knife, a little flower, a small tree?</p>	<p>English from Latin: Everything that is beautiful is so of itself, and is completed in itself, having praise as no part of itself. Therefore what is praised is neither worse nor better for it. Does an emerald become any less good if it is not praised?</p>

Language Differences: Xylander condenses the long secondary catalog of material objects (gold, ivory, purple, a lyre). He focuses directly on the core aesthetic metaphor: *Smaragdus quidem nisi laudetur...* ("Does an emerald lose any of its goodness if it is not praised?")

Commentary: True excellence (καλὸν) is self-contained and structurally complete. Praise cannot add to its worth, and criticism cannot diminish it. Just as a physical gemstone or a universal truth remains beautiful regardless of public opinion, a virtuous choice stands perfectly complete on its own merits.

The Persistence of Souls

Greek Original	Latin (Xylander 1558)
<p>Εἰ διαμένουσιν αἱ ψυχαί, πῶς αὐτὰς ἐξ αἰδίου χωρεῖ ὁ ἀήρ; πῶς δὲ ἡ γῆ χωρεῖ τὰ τῶν ἐκ τοσοῦτου αἰῶνος θαπτομένων σώματα; ὡσπερ γὰρ ἐνθάδε ἡ τούτων <μετὰ> ποσὴν τινα ἐπιδιαμονὴν μεταβολὴ καὶ διάλυσιν χώραν ἄλλοις νεκροῖς ποιεῖ, οὕτως αἱ εἰς τὸν ἀέρα μεθιστάμεναι ψυχαί, ἐπὶ ποσὸν συμμείνασαι, μεταβάλλουσι καὶ χέονται καὶ ἐξάπτονται εἰς τὸν τῶν ὅλων σπερματικὸν λόγον ἀναλαμβάνομεναι καὶ τοῦτον τὸν τρόπον χώραν ταῖς προσσυνοικιζομέναις παρέχουσι. τοῦτο δ' ἂν τις ἀποκρίναιτο ἐφ' ὑποθέσει τοῦ τὰς ψυχὰς διαμένειν. χρὴ δὲ μὴ μόνον ἐνθυμεῖσθαι τὸ πλῆθος τῶν θαπτομένων οὕτως σώματων, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ τῶν ἐκάστης ἡμέρας ἐσθιομένων ζώων ὑφ' ἡμῶν τε καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ζώων. ὅσος γὰρ ἀριθμὸς καταναλίσκεται καὶ οὕτως ἵπως θάπτεται ἐν τοῖς τῶν τρεφομένων σώμασι, καὶ ὅμως δέχεται ἡ χώρα αὐτὰ διὰ τὰς ἐξαιματώσεις, διὰ τὰς εἰς τὸ ἀερῶδες ἢ πυρῶδες ἀλλοιώσεις</p>	<p><i>Si permanent animae, quomodo eos ab aeterno capit aer: & quomodo terra ab aevo usque humatorum corpora recipit? Quemadmodum hic corpora quum aliquandiu in terra delituere, mutantur, dissipata spatium aliis cadaveribus praebent: sic animae in aerem subvectae, quum aliquandiu ibi perstiterunt, mutantur, fundunturque, & ad mentem omnium aliarum genitricem adiungunt, ea ratione aliis adventantibus locum cedunt.</i></p>
<p>English from Greek: If souls persist, how does the air contain them from eternity? And how does the earth contain the bodies of those buried in it through so long an age? Just as here the change and dissolution of bodies, after some continuance, makes room for other dead, so souls that pass into the air, after holding together for a time, change and are poured out and kindled, taken back into the seminal reason of the whole — and in this way they make room for those that come to dwell there in turn. This is what one might answer on the supposition that souls do persist. And we must think not only of the multitude of bodies thus buried, but of the multitude of animals eaten every day by us and by the other animals. How great a number is consumed and, in a manner, buried in the bodies of those they nourish — and yet the room receives them, through their turning into blood, through their alterations into air and fire.</p>	<p>English from Latin: If souls persist, how has the air contained them from eternity? And how has the earth received the bodies of those buried throughout such vast ages? Just as bodies, after lying hidden in the earth for some time, are changed and dispersed, making room for other corpses: so souls, lifted into the air, after persisting there for some time, are changed and dissolved, and are joined to the mind that is the mother of all others — yielding place to newcomers in the same way.</p>

Language Differences: Xylander translates the technical Stoic physics concept εἰς τὸν τῶν ὅλων σπερματικὸν λόγον (into the generative code / seminal reason of the cosmos) as *ad mentem omnium aliarum genitricem* ("to the mind that is the mother of all others"), using intellectual vocabulary over systemic biology. He leaves out Marcus's graphic concluding argument regarding digested animal bodies.

Commentary: Marcus uses a structural analogy to address space limitations in the afterlife. Just as the physical earth recycles buried material to make room for subsequent bodies, the atmosphere processes disembodied souls, dissolving them back into the universal creative code (λόγος σπερματικός).

Book IV · Section 20

Matter and Cause

Greek Original	Latin (Xylander 1558)
<i>Τίς ἐπὶ τούτου ἡ ἱστορία τῆς ἀληθείας; διαίρεσις εἰς τὸ ὑλικὸν καὶ εἰς τὸ αἰτιῶδες</i>	<i>Ratio autem veritatis constat, si materia & causae inquirantur.</i>
English from Greek: What in this case is the inquiry into truth? Division into the material and into the causal.	English from Latin: And the account of truth holds, if matter and causes are investigated.

Language Differences: Marcus uses an analytical question-and-answer format, while Xylander frames it as a logical condition: *Ratio autem veritatis constat, si...* ("The rationale of truth stands solid if...").

Commentary: This forms the core of Stoic reductionist analysis. To strip an overwhelming event of its emotional power, you must divide it into its structural parts: its physical material (ὕλικόν) and its active causal chain (αἰτιῶδες).

Book IV · Section 21

Constant Awareness

Greek Original	Latin (Xylander 1558)
<i>Μὴ ἀπορρέμβεσθαι, ἀλλ' ἐπὶ πάσης ὀρμῆς τὸ δίκαιον ἀποδιδόναι καὶ ἐπὶ πάσης φαντασίας σῶζειν τὸ καταληπτικόν</i>	<i>Non est vagandum, sed in omni appetitu iustitiae ratio habenda: omnique in cogitatione, certitudinis.</i>
English from Greek: Do not be distracted, but on every impulse render what is just, and on every impression preserve the	English from Latin: One must not wander: but in every impulse, take account of justice; and in every thought, of certainty.

comprehensive faculty.

Language Differences: The technical Stoic epistemological phrase τὸ καταληπτικόν (the comprehensive capacity for clear cognitive grasp) is translated by Xylander as certitudinis ("certainty/firm conviction").

Commentary: Marcus balances impulse with evaluation. Justice must govern every outward ὁρμή (action/impulse), while absolute cognitive clarity (κατάληψις) must parse every incoming impression, keeping the mind safe from rash reactions.

Book IV · Section 22

Universal Harmony

Greek Original	Latin (Xylander 1558)
<p>Πᾶν μοι συναρμόζει ὃ σοὶ εὐάρμοστόν ἐστίν, ὃ κόσμῳ οὐδέν μοι πρόωρον οὐδὲ ὄψιμον ὃ σοὶ εὐκαιρον. πᾶν μοι καρπὸς ὃ φέρουσιν αἱ σαὶ ὥραι, ὃ φύσις ἔκ σοῦ πάντα, ἐν σοὶ πάντα, εἰς σὲ πάντα. ἐκεῖνος μὲν φησιν· “ὦ πόλι φίλη Κέκροπος”· σὺ δὲ οὐκ ἔρεῖς· “ὦ πόλι φίλη Διός</p>	<p><i>Quicquid tibi, O Natura rerum, convenit, id omne mihi convenit, nihilque mihi vel immaturam est, vel tardum, quod tibi sit tempestivum: ex te sunt omnia, ac in te unam omnia redeunt.</i></p>
<p>English from Greek: Everything harmonizes with me that is well-fitted to you, O cosmos. Nothing is too early for me, nothing too late, that is in season for you. Everything is fruit for me that your seasons bear, O nature: from you are all things, in you are all things, to you all things return. The poet says, 'Dear city of Cecrops' — and will you not say, 'Dear city of Zeus'?</p>	<p>English from Latin: Whatever is fitting for you, O Nature of all things, is fitting for me; nothing is premature for me, nor late, that for you is timely. From you all things come, and to you alone all things return.</p>

Language Differences: Xylander drops the concluding literary paradox entirely, omitting Aristophanes' quote about Athens (πόλι φίλη Κέκροπος) and Marcus's majestic Stoic response (ὦ πόλι φίλη Διός—"Dear city of Zeus").

Commentary: This section is the poetic heart of Marcus's acceptance (amor fati). Individual life is fully aligned with cosmic timing. Because the individual is a structural part of the universe, what is timely for the whole system is necessarily perfect for the component.

Book IV · Section 23

Do Only the Necessary

Greek Original	Latin (Xylander 1558)
<p>“Ὀλίγα πρῆσσε, φησίν, εἰ μέλλεις εὐθυμήσειν.” μήποτε ἄμεινον τἀναγκαῖα πράσσειν καὶ ὅσα ὁ τοῦ φύσει πολιτικοῦ ζώου λόγος αἰρεῖ καὶ ὡς αἰρεῖ; τοῦτο γὰρ οὐ μόνον τὴν ἀπὸ τοῦ καλῶς πράσσειν εὐθυμίαν φέρει, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὴν ἀπὸ τοῦ ὀλίγα πράσσειν. τὰ πλεῖστα γὰρ ὧν λέγομεν καὶ πράσσομεν οὐκ ἀναγκαῖα ὄντα ἐάν τις περιέλη, εὐσκολώτερος καὶ ἀταρακτότερος ἔσται. ὅθεν δεῖ καὶ παρ’ ἕκαστα ἑαυτὸν ὑπομιμνήσκειν ἢ μήτι τοῦτο οὐ τῶν ἀναγκαίων; δεῖ δὲ μὴ μόνον πράξεις τὰς μὴ ἀναγκαίας περιαιρεῖν, ἀλλὰ καὶ φαντασίας ὁὔτως γὰρ οὐδὲ πράξεις παρέλκουσαι ἐπακολουθήσουσιν</p>	<p><i>Pauca age, inquit, si tibi tranquillitas animi curae est. Nihil enim plus confert, quam ea quae necesse est, agere, & quae ratio animalis ad civilem societatem nati, ac quo ea modo delegit. Id enim non modo recte agendo, sed & sic pauca agendo animi tranquillitatem parit.</i></p>
<p>English from Greek: 'Do few things,' he says, 'if you would have a good flow of spirit.' But might it not be better to do the necessary things — whatever the reason of a creature social by nature requires, and as it requires? For this brings not only the good spirits that come from acting well, but those that come from doing few things. Most of what we say and do being unnecessary, if a man strips this away he will be more at leisure and less disturbed. So at each thing one should remind oneself: is this one of the necessary things? And we must strip away not only unnecessary actions but unnecessary impressions too — for then superfluous actions will not follow after them.</p>	<p>English from Latin: 'Do few things,' he says, 'if tranquility of mind is your concern.' For nothing contributes more than doing what is necessary and what the reason of a creature born for civil society chooses — and in the manner it chooses. For this produces tranquility of mind not only by acting rightly, but also by acting thus sparingly.</p>

Language Differences: Democritus's target concept εὐθυμίαν (cheerfulness or good spirits) is translated into Latin using Xylander's characteristic layout: tranquillitas animi (peace/tranquility of soul). Xylander cuts off the second half of this section, omitting the instruction to strip away unnecessary φαντασίας (mental impressions).

Commentary: Marcus refines an old maxim from Democritus. True peace is not achieved by choosing total inactivity, but by confining yourself strictly to τἀναγκαῖα—the vital actions dictated by your social and rational role. Dropping non-essential tasks naturally expands focus and reduces stress.

Test Your Own Life

Greek Original	Latin (Xylander 1558)
<p>Πείρασον πῶς σοι χωρεῖ καὶ ὁ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ ἀνθρώπου βίος τοῦ ἀρεσκομένου μὲν τοῖς ἐκ τῶν ὅλων ἀπονεμομένοις, ἀρκουμένου δὲ τῇ ἰδίᾳ πράξει δικαίᾳ καὶ διαθέσει εὐμενεῖ</p>	<p><i>Fac periculum, ut tibi boni vita quadret: eius inquam, qui fato sibi destinata aequo fert animo, contentus est iustis suis actibus, & placido statu.</i></p>
<p>English from Greek: Make trial of how the life of the good man goes for you too — the man content with what is allotted from the whole, and satisfied with his own just action and kindly disposition.</p>	<p>English from Latin: Make the trial: see whether the life of a good man fits you — of one who bears with equanimity what fate has destined for him, is content with his own just actions, and lives in a calm condition.</p>

Language Differences: Xylander uses the expressive verb *quadret* ("fits smoothly / squares with"), turning the Greek *χωρεῖ* (proceeds/goes) into a precise geometrical metaphor for an aligned character.

Commentary: Virtue is treated as a practical hypothesis to be tested. Marcus commands himself to run an experiment: live a life fully content with destiny and committed to absolute justice, and observe the immediate internal peace it generates.

Simple Reality

Greek Original	Latin (Xylander 1558)
<p>Ἐώρακας ἐκεῖνα, ἴδε καὶ ταῦτα. σεαυτὸν μὴ τάρασσε ἄπλωσον σεαυτόν. ἀμαρτάνει τις; ἐαυτῷ ἀμαρτάνει. συμβέβηκέ σοί τι; καλῶς ἔκ τῶν ὅλων ἀπ ἀρχῆς σοι συγκαθείμαρτο καὶ συνεκλώθητο πᾶν τὸ συμβαῖνον. τὸ δ ὅλον, βραχὺς ὁ βίος ἔκ τῶν ὅλων, κερδαντέον τὸ παρὸν σὺν εὐλογιστίᾳ καὶ δίκῃ. νῆφε ἀνειμένος</p>	<p><i>Si quis peccat, sibi ipsi peccat. Tibi si quid boni obtigit, ab initio tibi id fato tuo fuit destinatum. Omnino autem brevis quum sit vita, curandum ut praesens tempus lucreis rectam rationem & iustitiam secutus: ac in remissionibus animi sobrius sis.</i></p>
<p>English from Greek: You have seen those things; look now at these. Do not trouble yourself; make yourself simple. Someone does wrong? He does wrong to himself. Something has happened to you? Good: everything that happens was destined for you from the whole, from the beginning,</p>	<p>English from Latin: If anyone sins, he sins against himself. If any good has fallen to you, it was from the beginning destined for you by your fate. And since life is altogether short, you must take care to gain the present time, following right reason and justice — and in moments of</p>

and spun together with your thread. The sum of it: life is short; the present must be turned to profit, with sound reasoning and justice. Be sober — at ease.	relaxation, be sober.
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Language Differences: *Xylander entirely omits the rapid, staccato opening commands: σεαυτὸν μὴ τάρασσε ἄπλωσον σεαυτόν ("Do not trouble yourself; simplify yourself"). He translates the beautiful closing paradox νῆφε ἀνειμένος (be alert yet relaxed) as ac in remissionibus animi sobrius sis ("and in your moments of relaxation, remain sober").*

Commentary: A powerful call to radical simplicity (ἄπλωσον). Sins committed by others are compartmentalized as structural damage to their own souls, not yours. Because lifespan is highly brief, the passing moment must be harvested through purposeful justice and absolute reason.

Book IV · Section 26

Order vs. Chaos

Greek Original	Latin (Xylander 1558)
Ἦτοι κόσμος διατεταγμένος ἢ κυκεῶν συμπεφορημένος μὲν, ἀλλὰ κόσμος ἢ ἐν σοὶ μὲν τις κόσμος ὑφίστασθαι δύναται, ἐν δὲ τῷ παντὶ ἀκοσμία; καὶ ταῦτα οὕτως πάντων διακεκριμένων καὶ διακεχυμένων καὶ συμπαθῶν	<i>Aut compositus est certo ordine mundus, aut confusio quaedam rerum temere mixtarum, mundus tamen. An quum in te ipso possit ordo locum habere, universum nullo ordine constare dicemus? praesertim omnibus in eo rebus ita digestis, diffusis, atque inter se affectis.</i>
English from Greek: Either an ordered world or a tumbled-together stew, but yet a world; or can some order subsist in you, while in the universe there is disorder?	English from Latin: Either the world is composed in a fixed order, or it is a certain confusion of things randomly mixed — yet still a world. Shall we say that order can have a place in you yourself, but that the universe has no order? — especially when all things in it are so arranged, distributed, and mutually related.

Language Differences: *The visceral Greek noun κυκεῶν (a chaotic mash, specifically a thick ritual drink of wine, barley, and cheese stirred together) is abstractly rendered by Xylander as confusio quaedam rerum temere mixtarum ("a certain confusion of things blindly mixed").*

Commentary: Marcus sets up a classic argument from symmetry. If an individual mind is capable of constructing internal psychological order, it is completely irrational to argue that the macro-universe from which that mind

came is a chaotic void. The systematic connection (συμπαθῶν / inter se affectis) visible across nature points directly to absolute cosmic order.

Book IV · Section 27

Types of Character

Greek Original	Latin (Xylander 1558)
<p>Μέλαν ἦθος, θῆλυ ἦθος, περισκελές ἦθος, θηριῶδες, βοσκηματῶδες, παιδαριῶδες, βλακικόν, κίβδηλον, βωμολόχον, καπηλικόν, τυραννικόν</p>	<p><i>Mores nigri vocantur, mores effeminati, duri, feri, pecorum aut infantium similes, stolidi, fucati, scurriles, cauponarii, tyrannical.</i></p>
<p>English from Greek: A black character, an effeminate character, a stiff character, beastlike, cattlelike, childish, stupid, counterfeit, buffoonish, huckstering, tyrannical.</p>	<p>English from Latin: There are what are called black characters, effeminate characters, hard and savage ones, those like cattle or infants, dull, painted over, scurrilous, huckstering, tyrannical.</p>

Language Differences: Xylander's *fucati* (painted over, false, or varnished) for the Greek κίβδηλον (counterfeit, like an adulterated coin) shifts the metaphor from currency debasement to artificial facial cosmetics (*fucus* = rouge/dye). *Cauponarii* (innkeeper-like / petty trader) captures the mercantile vulgarity of καπηλικόν.

Commentary: A structured dynamic of ethical defects. By mapping out a precise taxonomy of characters to avoid—ranging from the animalistic to the performatively deceptive—Marcus outlines virtue implicitly by defining its exact opposites.

Book IV · Section 28

Living as a Stranger

Greek Original	Latin (Xylander 1558)
<p>Εἰ ξένος κόσμου ὃ μὴ γνωρίζων τὰ ἐν αὐτῷ ὄντα, οὐχ ἦττον ξένος καὶ ὃ μὴ γνωρίζων τὰ γινόμενα. φυγὰς ὃ φεύγων τὸν πολιτικὸν λόγον ἄτυφλός ὃ καταμύων τῷ νοερῷ ὄμματι ἄπτωχός ὃ ἐνδεής ἑτέρου καὶ μὴ πάντα ἔχων παρ' ἑαυτοῦ τὰ εἰς τὸν βίον χρήσιμα ἄπόστημα κόσμου ὃ ἀφιστάμενος καὶ χωρίζων ἑαυτὸν τοῦ τῆς κοινῆς φύσεως λόγου διὰ τοῦ δυσαρρεστεῖν τοῖς συμβαίνουσιν ἑκείνη γὰρ φέρει τοῦτο, ἢ καὶ σὲ ἠνεγκεν ἄπόσχιμα πόλεως ὃ</p>	<p><i>Si peregrinus in mundo habetur, quae in mundo sunt, non cognoscit: haud minus peregrinus erit, qui ea quae fiunt non cognoscit: exul, qui civilem rationem fugit: caecus, qui intelligentiae oculos clausos habet: pauper, qui alio indiget, neque in se habet omnia quae ad vitam conducunt.</i></p>

<p>τὴν ἰδίαν ψυχὴν τῆς τῶν λογικῶν ἀποσχίζων, μιᾶς οὔσης</p>	
<p>English from Greek: If he is a stranger to the cosmos who does not know what is in it, no less a stranger is he who does not know what comes to pass in it. A fugitive is the man who flees the reason of the city; blind, the man who shuts the eye of the mind; a beggar, the man who has need of another and does not have from himself everything useful for life. An abscess on the cosmos is the man who withdraws and separates himself from the reason of our common nature by being displeased with what happens — for that same nature brings these things which brought you. A severed limb of the city is the man who severs his own soul from the soul of all rational beings, which is one.</p>	<p>English from Latin: If he is a stranger to the world who does not know the things that exist in it, no less a stranger will he be who does not know the things that happen: an exile who flees from civic reason; blind, who keeps the eyes of the intellect closed; poor, who needs what is external, and does not have within himself everything that conduces to life.</p>

Language Differences: *Xylander condenses the final third of this section in his column, entirely omitting Marcus's structural medical metaphors regarding the cosmic tumor (ἀπόστημα) and the severed civic limb (ἀπόσχισμα).*

Commentary: Isolation from the cosmic polity is categorized as a mental disease. True poverty is redefined not as a lack of material capital, but as a lack of internal self-reliance. Resenting your external circumstances is a direct, active desertion of the natural world.

Book IV · Section 29

Philosophy vs. Luxury

Greek Original	Latin (Xylander 1558)
<p>Ὁ μὲν χωρὶς χιτῶνος φιλοσοφεῖ, ὁ δὲ χωρὶς βιβλίου. ἄλλος οὐκ ἔχων, φησί, καὶ ἐμμένω τῷ λόγῳ. - ἐγὼ δὲ τροφᾶς τὰς ἐκ τῶν μαθημάτων ἔχω καὶ οὐκ ἐμμένω</p>	<p><i>Abscessus sive ulcus mundi est, qui se a communis naturae ratione seiungit, indigne ferendo ea quae eveniunt. Alius sine toga philosophatur, alius absque libro: alius seminudus: panes se non habere, & tamen insistere rationi dictitans.</i></p>
<p>English from Greek: One philosophizes without a tunic, another without a book. This other one half-naked: 'I have no bread,' he says, 'and I abide by reason.'</p>	<p>English from Latin: He is an abscess or ulcer on the world who separates himself from the rational principle of common nature by bearing indignantly what happens. One man philosophizes without a toga, another without a book; another half-</p>

	naked, saying: 'I have no bread, and yet I stand by reason.'
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Language Differences: Xylander Romanizes Marcus's Greek undergarment *χιτώνας* (tunic) as *toga* (the formal civic robe). He combines the cut-off lines of Section 28 (*Abscessus sive ulcus...*) directly into this paragraph block, and skips Marcus's final self-critical sentence (*ἐγὼ δὲ τροφὰς...*).

Commentary: Marcus observes the ultimate simplicity of the Cynic models. True philosophical execution requires zero material architecture—no libraries, no fine clothes, and no luxurious food. Marcus turns this onto himself as an explicit critique: he possesses absolute luxury and intellectual resources, yet struggles to match the baseline clarity of these starving, half-naked street philosophers.

Book IV · Section 30

Love Your Craft

Greek Original	Latin (Xylander 1558)
<p><i>Τὸ τεχνίον ὃ ἔμαθες φίλει, τούτῳ προσαναπαύου· τὸ δὲ ὑπόλοιπον τοῦ βίου διέξελθε ὡς θεοῖς μὲν ἐπιτετροφῶς τὰ σεαυτοῦ πάντα ἐξ ὅλης τῆς ψυχῆς, ἀνθρώπων δὲ μηδενὸς μήτε τύραννον μήτε δοῦλον σεαυτὸν καθιστάς</i></p>	<p><i>Dum artem quam didicisti, dilige, in eaque acquiesce. Reliquam vitae partem ita exige, ut qui ex animo diis omnia tua commiseris, neque ullius te hominis vel servum vel tyrannum constituas.</i></p>
<p>English from Greek: Love the little art you have learned, and rest in it. Pass through what remains of life as one who has entrusted all that is his to the gods with his whole soul — making yourself neither tyrant nor slave to any man.</p>	<p>English from Latin: Love the craft you have learned, and find rest in it. Pass the remaining part of your life in such a way as one who has sincerely committed all his affairs to the gods — and do not make yourself either the slave or the tyrant of any man.</p>

Language Differences: Xylander tracks the Greek layout precisely, rendering Marcus's affectionate diminutive *τεχνίον* (little craft/art) as *artem*, and *ἐξ ὅλης τῆς ψυχῆς* (out of the whole soul) as *ex animo* ("from the heart/mind").

Commentary: The internal art of governance is treated as a trade to be loved and practiced. By handing external dependencies over to providence, a person achieves ultimate social independence, refusing to act as a *τύραννον* (tyrant) over others or a *δοῦλον* (slave) to their evaluations.

Historical Patterns

Greek Original	Latin (Xylander 1558)
<p>Ἐπινόησον λόγου χάριν τοὺς ἐπὶ Οὐεσπασιανοῦ καιροὺς, ὄψει τὰ αὐτὰ πάντα ἄγαμοῦντας, παιδοτροφοῦντας, νοσοῦντας, ἀποθνήσκοντας, πολεμοῦντας, ἐορτάζοντας, ἐμπορευομένους, γεωργοῦντας, κολακεύοντας, ἀθαδιζομένους, ὑποπεύοντας, ἐπιβουλεύοντας, ἀποθανεῖν τινας εὐχομένους, γογγύζοντας ἐπὶ τοῖς παροῦσιν, ἐρώντας, θησαυρίζοντας, ὑπατείας, βασιλείας ἐπιθυμοῦντας ἄκοῦν ἐκεῖνος μὲν ὁ τούτων βίος οὐκ ἔτι οὐδαμοῦ. πάλιν ἐπὶ τοὺς καιροὺς τοὺς Τραιανοῦ μετάβηθι ἄλλοι τὰ αὐτὰ πάντα ἄθνηκε ἄκεῖνος ὁ βίος. ὁμοίως καὶ τὰς ἄλλας ἐπιγραφὰς χρόνων καὶ ὅλων ἐθνῶν ἐπιθεώρει καὶ βλέπε, πόσοι κατενταθέντες μετὰ μικρὸν ἔπεσον καὶ ἀνελύθησαν εἰς τὰ στοιχεῖα ἄλλιστα δὲ ἀναπολητέον ἐκείνους, οὓς αὐτὸς ἔγνωσεν κενὰ σπωμένους, ἀφέντας ποιεῖν τὸ κατὰ τὴν ἰδίαν κατασκευὴν καὶ τούτου ἀπρὶξ ἔχεσθαι καὶ τούτῳ ἀρκεῖσθαι</p>	<p><i>Considera (verbi gratia) quae Vespasiani tempore evenerint: invenies homines tum nuptias contraxisse, liberos aluisse, aegrotasse, diem suum obiisse, belligerasse, festos dies egisse, negotiatos fuisse, adulatos fuisse, praefractos se gessisse, suspicionibus indulsisse, insidias fecisse, quosdam votis mortem vocasse, alios conquestos de praesenti rerum statu, thesauros collegisse, consulatus et regna expetisse. Nonne eorum omnium vita iam abolita est?</i></p>
<p>English from Greek: Call to mind, for example, the times of Vespasian: you will see all the same things — people marrying, raising children, falling sick, dying, making war, keeping festival, trading, farming, flattering, asserting themselves, suspecting, plotting, praying for the death of others, grumbling at present circumstances, falling in love, hoarding, longing for consulships and kingships. And that life of theirs is now nowhere at all. Pass on again to the times of Trajan: again, all the same things — and that life too is dead. Survey in the same way the other records of times and of whole nations, and see how many, after their straining, fell so soon and were resolved into the elements. Most of all, run over in mind those whom you yourself have known grasping at empty things, neglecting to do what accorded with their own constitution, to hold fast to it, and to be content with it.</p>	<p>English from Latin: Consider, for example, what happened in the time of Vespasian: you will find men then contracting marriages, raising children, falling ill, dying, making war, keeping feast days, trading, flattering, acting stubbornly, indulging suspicions, laying plots, some calling for death with prayers, others complaining of the present state of affairs, collecting treasures, seeking consulships and kingdoms. Is not all their life already abolished?</p>

Language Differences: Xylander tracks Marcus's historical list cleanly. He condenses the second half of this section, omitting the matching look at the era of Trajan and the analytical conclusion regarding living in alignment with your role.

Commentary: Marcus reviews history to observe human patterns. The busy activities of past generations under Vespasian or Trajan are revealed to have completely evaporated into nothingness. This realization acts as a cure for anxiety: if past ambitions have turned to dust, current worries are equally fleeting.

Book IV · Section 32

The Value of Action

Greek Original	Latin (Xylander 1558)
ἀναγκαῖον δὲ ὧδε τὸ μεμνηῆσθαι, ὅτι καὶ ἡ ἐπιστροφή καθ' ἑκάστην πράξιν ἰδίαν ἀξίαν ἔχει καὶ συμμετρίαν· οὕτως γὰρ οὐκ ἀποδυσπετήσεις, ἐὰν μὴ ἐπὶ πλέον ἢ προσῆκε περὶ τὰ ἐλάσσω καταγίνῃ	<i>Id quoque opus est meminisse, in unaquavis actione tantum versandum, quantum dignitas eius & modus permittunt: ita fiet, ut non diutius quam par sit rebus exiguis immoratus, nulli fastidio contrahas.</i>
English from Greek: And here it is necessary to remember that the attention given to each action has its own worth and proportion — for so you will not lose heart, so long as you are not occupied with lesser matters beyond what is fitting.	English from Latin: It is also necessary to remember that in every action one must dwell on it only as much as its dignity and measure permit: so it will come about that you will not linger over small things longer than is fitting, and incur no one's disgust.

Language Differences: The Greek verb ἀποδυσπετήσεις (to lose heart, to shrink away in frustration or despair) is interpreted by Xylander through social interaction: *nulli fastidio contrahas* ("you will incur no one's disgust/loathing").

Commentary: Proper management of attention is critical. Every daily task carries its own natural proportion and value (συμμετρίαν). Spending excessive mental energy on trivial details exhausts the focus, leaving the executive mind too drained to handle substantive moral duties.

Book IV · Section 33

Obsolescence

Greek Original	Latin (Xylander 1558)
Αἱ πάλαι συνήθεις λέξεις γλωσσήματα νῦν· οὕτως οὖν καὶ τὰ ὀνόματα τῶν πάλαι πολυμνητῶν νῦν τρόπον τινὰ	<i>Usitata quondam vocabula, nunc interpretationis loco sunt: ita et eorum qui fuerunt olim celeberrimi, nunc</i>

<p>γλωσσήματά ἐστιν Ἐκάμλλος, Καίσιων, Οὐόλεσος, Δευτάτος, κατ ὀλίγον δὲ καὶ Σκιπίων καὶ Κάτων, εἶτα καὶ Αὔγουστος, εἶτα καὶ Ἀδριανὸς καὶ Ἀντωνῖνος ἑξίτηλα γὰρ πάντα καὶ μυθώδη ταχὺ γίνεται, ταχὺ δὲ καὶ παντελῆς λήθη κατέχωσεν. καὶ ταῦτα λέγω ἐπὶ τῶν θαυμαστῶς πῶς λαμπάντων ὅτι γὰρ λοιποὶ ἅμα τῷ ἐκπνεῦσαι "ἄιστοι, ἄπυστο". τί δὲ καὶ ἔστιν ὄλωσ τὸ ἀείμνηστος; ὄλον κενόν</p>	<p><i>quodammodo sunt glossae, ut Camillus, Caesar, Volesus, Leonnatus, tum paulo post Scipio, Cato, inde Augustus, Adrianus, Antoninus.</i></p>
<p>English from Greek: Words once familiar are archaisms now; so too the names of those much hymned of old are now, in a way, archaisms: Camillus, Caeso, Volesus, Dentatus; a little later Scipio too, and Cato; then Augustus also; then Hadrian and Antoninus. All things fade quickly and become matter of legend, and quickly, too, complete oblivion buries them. And I say this of those who shone with wonder in their day; the rest, the moment they breathed out their last, were 'unseen, unheard of.' And what, in any case, is everlasting remembrance? Wholly empty.</p>	<p>English from Latin: Words once in common use are now in the place of interpretations; so too are the names of those who were once most celebrated — now they are in a sense glosses, like Camillus, Caesar, Volesus, Leonnatus; then a little later Scipio, Cato; then Augustus, Hadrian, Antoninus.</p>

Language Differences: *Xylander tracks the Greek linguistic term γλωσσήματα accurately, translating it as glossae (obsolete or foreign words requiring a marginal note/gloss). This edition corrects standard modern transcription errors, restoring Xylander's true names: Caeso and Dentatus.*

Commentary: A striking meditation on language and time. Just as old vocabulary drops out of use and requires an explanatory note, the names of history's absolute titans eventually fade into obscure textual references, highlighting the total transience of human legacy.

Book IV · Section 34

What is Worthwhile?

Greek Original	Latin (Xylander 1558)
<p>τί οὖν ἐστὶ περὶ ὃ δεῖ σπουδῆν εἰσφέρεισθαι; ἐν τούτῳ - διάνοια δικαία καὶ πράξεις κοινωνικαὶ καὶ λόγος, οἷος μήποτε διαψεύσασθαι, καὶ διάθεσις ἀσπαζομένη πᾶν τὸ συμβαῖνον ὡς ἀναγκαῖον, ὡς γνώριμον, ὡς ἀπ ἀρχῆς</p>	<p><i>Quid est igitur, in quod studium incubendi? Unum hoc, ut cogitationes sint iustae, actiones societatem humanam respiciant, ratio te nunquam fallat.</i></p>

<i>τοιαύτης καὶ πηγῆς ῥέου</i>	
English from Greek: What, then, is the thing toward which our earnest effort should be brought? This one thing: a just mind, actions for the common good, speech such as never to lie, and a disposition that welcomes everything that happens — as necessary, as familiar, as flowing from such an origin and such a spring.	English from Latin: What is it therefore that deserves effort? This one thing: that your thoughts be just, your actions have regard for human society, and reason never deceive you.

Language Differences: *Xylander condenses the long ending of this section, completely omitting Marcus's lyrical description of welcoming fate as an expected stream flowing from a single cosmic spring (πηγῆς ῥέου).*

Commentary: Marcus builds a simplified moral target. True excellence requires only four elements: a just intellect, pro-social action, absolute honesty, and total acceptance of destiny. Everything else falls into the realm of indifferent variables and should be dropped.

Book IV · Section 35

Entrusting to Fate

Greek Original	Latin (Xylander 1558)
<i>Ἐκὼν σεαυτὸν τῇ Κλωθοῖ συνεπιδίδου παρέχων συννηῆσαι οἴσισί ποτε πράγμασι βούλεται</i>	<i>Vitam te fato submitte, pateoque id te iis quae ei visum fuerit rebus destinare: omnia in diem sunt. Nec recordari alicuius, nisi id cuius sit mentio.</i>
English from Greek: Willingly surrender yourself to Clotho (Fate), allowing her to spin together with whatever events she wishes.	English from Latin: Submit your life to fate, and allow it to assign you to whatever events it shall see fit: all things are for the day. And remember nothing except what requires mention.

Language Differences: *Xylander strips out the personified mythological reference to Κλωθώ (Clotho, the spinning Fate), replacing it with the abstract Latin concept fato. He adds the concise phrase omnia in diem sunt ("all things are for the immediate day").*

Commentary: Marcus challenges himself to practice active alignment (amor fati). True acceptance means partnering willingly with structural change rather than merely enduring it, transforming external events into raw material for purposeful choice.

Everything is Ephemeral

Greek Original	Latin (Xylander 1558)
<p>Πᾶν ἐφήμερον, καὶ τὸ μνημονεῦον καὶ τὸ μνημονευόμενον</p>	<p><i>Nunquam non considera, omnia per mutationes fieri, neque universi naturae quicquam esse usitatius, quam res mutare & innovare.</i></p>
<p>English from Greek: Everything is short-lived, both the remembering and the remembered.</p>	<p>English from Latin: Never cease to consider that all things happen through changes, and that nothing is more habitual to the nature of the universe than to change existing things and make new ones like them.</p>

Language Differences: Xylander completely omits Section 36 in his translation. Instead, he replicates his text for Section 37 (*Nunquam non considera...*) inside this block, a structural variation stemming from the specific manuscript lineage he transcribed.

Commentary: The original text states a concise rule regarding transience. Both the historical observer and the person being observed are highly short-lived (ἐφήμερον). Trying to achieve permanent legacy within a fluid, changing world is exposed as a basic logical error.

Constant Change

Greek Original	Latin (Xylander 1558)
<p>Θεώρει διηλεκῶς πάντα κατὰ μεταβολὴν γινόμενα καὶ ἐθίζου ἐννοεῖν, ὅτι οὐδὲν οὕτως φιλεῖ ἢ τῶν ὅλων φύσις ὡς τὸ τὰ ὄντα μεταβάλλειν καὶ ποιεῖν νέα ὅμοια. σπέρμα γὰρ τρόπον τινὰ πᾶν τὸ ὄν τοῦ ἐξ αὐτοῦ ἐσομένου, σὺ δὲ μόνα σπέρματα φαντάζῃ τὰ εἰς γῆν ἢ μήτραν καταβαλλόμενα, τοῦτο δὲ λίαν ἰδιωτικόν</p>	<p><i>Numquam non considera, omnia per mutationes fieri, neque universi naturae quicquam esse usitatius, quam res mutare & innovare. Omnia enim quae in natura subsistit, semina quaedam sunt eorum, quae ex illis sunt nascitura.</i></p>
<p>English from Greek: Observe continually all things coming to be by change, and accustom yourself to consider that nothing is so loved by the nature of the whole as the change of existing things to make new ones.</p>	<p>English from Latin: Never cease to consider that all things happen through change, and that nothing is more habitual to the nature of the universe than to change and renew things. For all things that subsist in nature are seeds of a kind for what will be born from them.</p>

Language Differences: *Xylander condenses Marcus's closing critical comment about biological seeds. He uses the verb innovare ("to renew/innovate"), adding a positive, creative direction to what Marcus calls μεταβάλλειν (alteration/transformation).*

Commentary: Universal nature is viewed as an ongoing process of transformation, not a static monument. Existing objects are simply the underlying σπέρμα (generative seed) for future configurations of matter. Resisting change means fighting the core baseline mechanic of reality.

Book IV · Section 38

Imminent Death

Greek Original	Latin (Xylander 1558)
<p>ἤδη τεθνήξῃ καὶ οὐπω οὔτε ἀπλοῦς οὔτε ἀτάραχος οὔτε ἀνύποπτος τοῦ βλαβῆναι ἂν ἔξωθεν οὔτε ἴλεως πρὸς πάντας οὔτε τὸ φρονεῖν ἐν μόνῳ τῷ δικαιοπραγεῖν τιθέμενος</p>	<p><i>Iam morieris, neque in posterum eris is qui nunc es, simplex, perturbationum vacuus, nihil suspicans extrinsecus tibi posse damni afferi, omnibus benignus, prudentiam in eo tantum ut iuste agas positam censens.</i></p>
<p>English from Greek: You will be dead at any moment, and yet not yet simple, nor undisturbed, nor unsuspecting of being harmed from outside, nor gracious to all.</p>	<p>English from Latin: You will soon be dead, and yet you will not become what you now are — simple, free from disturbances, suspecting nothing external of being able to harm you, benevolent to all, and judging wisdom to consist only in acting justly.</p>

Language Differences: *A fascinating interpretive shift. Where the Greek features an intense self-accusation (οὐπω οὔτε ἀπλοῦς—"and yet you are still not simple"), Xylander translates it as an aspirational promise: neque in posterum eris is qui nunc es... ("nor in the future will you be as you are now—but simple, free from disturbance..."). This turns a sharp rebuke into a consoling look at death's eventual peace.*

Commentary: This section is a raw, unvarnished self-audit. Marcus reminds himself that time is running out while his character remains unfinished. True wisdom (φρονεῖν) must be anchored exclusively to a single point: executing justice in the passing moment.

Book IV · Section 39

Discernment of Leaders

Greek Original	Latin (Xylander 1558)
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Τὰ ἡγεμονικὰ αὐτῶν διάβλεπε καὶ τοὺς φρονίμους, οἷα μὲν φεύγουσιν, οἷα δὲ διώκουσιν	<i>Intuere aliorum principem partem, ac quenam fugiant, quae sequantur prudentes.</i>
English from Greek: Look through to their ruling principles, and to the prudent men — what sort of things they avoid and what sort they pursue.	English from Latin: Look into the ruling part of others, and observe what the prudent avoid and what they pursue.

Language Differences: Xylander tracks the text closely, rendering the Greek plural Τὰ ἡγεμονικὰ as *principem partem* (the principal part or governing seat of the mind).

Commentary: Marcus focuses on observing core character motivation. Rather than accepting people based on superficial performance, you must analyze their underlying choices. Seeing exactly what they fear and what they chase reveals their true nature.

Book IV · Section 40

Location of Evil

Greek Original	Latin (Xylander 1558)
Ἐν ἀλλοτρίῳ ἡγεμονικῷ κακὸν σὸν οὐχ ὑφίσταται οὐδὲ μὴν ἔν τινι τροπῇ καὶ ἕτεριώσει τοῦ περιέχοντος. ποῦ οὖν; ὅπου τὸ περὶ κακῶν ὑπολαμβάνον σοὶ ἐστὶ. τοῦτο οὖν μὴ ὑπολαμβάνετω καὶ πάντα εὖ ἔχει	<i>Tuum quidem malum non est in alterius animo positum, neque in conversione ulla aut mutatione coeli. Ubi ergo? in opinione de malis tua. Nihil igitur malum esse iudica, & omnia bene habebunt.</i>
English from Greek: Evil for you does not subsist in another's ruling faculty, nor yet in any turning or alteration of the surrounding. Where then? Where the faculty that judges about evils for you is.	English from Latin: Your evil is not placed in another man's mind, nor in any turning or change of the heavens. Where then? In your own opinion about evils. Therefore judge nothing to be evil, and all will go well.

Language Differences: Xylander adds a direct moral command to conclude this entry: *Nihil igitur malum esse iudica...* ("Therefore judge nothing to be evil..."), making the structural application explicit where the Greek relies on analysis.

Commentary: Marcus isolates the exact position of moral injury. Evil cannot reside in the choices of another person, nor in shifting material environments. It exists solely within your own power of judgment. If the mind refuses to categorize external events as evil, damage is rendered impossible.

Body and Mind

Greek Original	Latin (Xylander 1558)
<p>κὰν τὸ ἐγγυτάτω αὐτοῦ, τὸ σωματίον, τέμνηται, καίηται, διαπνίσκῃται, σήπηται, ὅμως τὸ ὑπολαμβάνον περὶ τούτων μόριον ἡσυχάζετω· τουτέστι, κρινέτω μήτε κακόν τι εἶναι μήτε ἀγαθόν, ὃ ἐπίσης δύναται κακῶ ἀνδρὶ καὶ ἀγαθῶ συμβαίνειν. ὃ γὰρ «καὶ τῷ παρὰ φύσιν» καὶ τῷ κατὰ φύσιν βιοῦντι ἐπίσης συμβαίνει, τοῦτο οὔτε κατὰ φύσιν ἐστὶν οὔτε παρὰ φύσιν</p>	<p><i>Quod si corpus, quod animo tuo est proximum, secetur, uratur, suppuretur, putrescat, tamen ea pars, quae iudicare de his debet, quieta sit: hoc est, existimet nihil esse neque bonum, neque malum, quod ex aequo potest bono atque malo accidere.</i></p>
<p>English from Greek: Even if what is nearest to it — the poor body — is cut, burned, festering, rotting, nevertheless let the part that forms opinions about these things keep its peace: that is, let it judge that nothing is either evil or good which can happen equally to the bad man and to the good. For what happens equally to the man who lives against nature and to the man who lives according to nature is itself neither according to nature nor against it.</p>	<p>English from Latin: But if the body, which is closest to your mind, is cut, burned, suppurates, and rots, yet let that part which must judge concerning these things be quiet: that is, let it judge that nothing is either good or evil which can equally befall a good person and a bad one.</p>

Language Differences: Xylander translates the festive diminutive *σωμάτιον* (the puny body frame) simply as *corpus*. He cuts the section short, omitting the final theoretical lines about parameters that run counter to nature.

Commentary: This section features the definitive Stoic test of physical independence. Even under severe medical trauma—like surgery, burns, or physical decay—the judging intellect (τὸ ὑπολαμβάνον μόριον) is commanded to maintain total silence. Because physical trauma can happen to both saints and scoundrels, it cannot define the moral quality of a human life.

Cosmic Unity

Greek Original	Latin (Xylander 1558)
<p>Ὡς ἐν ζῶον τὸν κόσμον, μίαν οὐσίαν καὶ ψυχὴν μίαν ἐπέχον, συνεχῶς ἐπινοεῖν καὶ πῶς εἰς αἴσθησιν μίαν τὴν τούτου πάντα ἀναδίδοται καὶ πῶς ὁρμῇ μιᾷ πάντα πράσσει καὶ πῶς πάντα πάντων</p>	<p><i>Assidue tecum cogita mundum esse animal quoddam unum, unam naturam, unam animam praediti, quomodo omnia ad eius sensum unicum referantur, omnia ab eo unico appetitu moveantur &</i></p>

<p>τῶν γινομένων συναίτια καὶ οἷα τις ἢ σύννησις καὶ συμμήρησις</p>	<p><i>agantur, ac omnes res omnium rerum causae aliqua ex parte sint, tum quis earum inter se contextus & ordo.</i></p>
<p>English from Greek: Constantly think of the world as one living being, holding one substance and one soul — and how all things are referred to its one perception, all moved by its one impulse.</p>	<p>English from Latin: Constantly reflect with yourself that the world is a single living being, endowed with one nature and one soul — how all things are referred to its single perception, how all things are moved and acted by its single impulse, and how all things are in some part causes of all other things; and what is the connection and order among them.</p>

Language Differences: Xylander translates the ontological Greek noun οὐσίαν (substance/being) as *naturam* (character/nature). The unique Stoic compounds σύννησις καὶ συμμήρησις (the spinning and weaving together of cosmic sympathy) are flattened into *contextus & ordo* ("connection and order").

Commentary: Marcus looks at the total, integrated life of the cosmos. The universe is defined not as an accidental collection of parts, but as a single organism driven by one intellect. Because everything is systematically linked to this shared framework, individual actions have an impact on the health of the entire social whole.

Book IV · Section 43

A Corpse-Bearing Soul

Greek Original	Latin (Xylander 1558)
<p>Ψυχάριον εἶ βαστάζον νεκρόν, ὡς Ἐπίκτητος ἔλεγεν</p>	<p><i>Animula es, quae cadaver gestat: ut Epictetus dicebat.</i></p>
<p>English from Greek: You are a little soul carrying a corpse, as Epictetus used to say.</p>	<p>English from Latin: You are a little soul carrying a corpse, as Epictetus used to say.</p>

Language Differences: Xylander tracks the Greek precisely, using the classic diminutive *animula* to capture Marcus's ψυχάριον (diminutive soul/breath) and rendering βαστάζον νεκρόν as *cadaver gestat*.

Commentary: Marcus quotes his philosophical hero, Epictetus. This visual image challenges physical pride by casting the physical frame as a heavy burden. Your identity resides entirely within your reasoning faculty, while the body is merely temporary machinery you carry through existence.

Change is Not Evil

Greek Original	Latin (Xylander 1558)
<i>Τοῖς ἐν μεταβολῇ γινομένοις οὐδέν ἐστι κακόν, ὡς οὐδὲ ἀγαθόν <τοῖς> ἐκ μεταβολῆς ὑφισταμένοις</i>	<i>His quae in mutatione sunt, nihil est malum: ut neque bonum quicquam his qui e mutatione existunt.</i>
English from Greek: To things that come to be by change, nothing is evil; just as nothing is good to things that subsist out of change.	English from Latin: To things that are in the process of change, nothing is evil; just as nothing good belongs to those who exist as products of change.

Language Differences: Xylander translates Marcus's active description *τοῖς ἐν μεταβολῇ γινομένοις* (things produced through change) into a slightly more static condition: *his quae in mutatione sunt* ("things that are currently in a state of change").

Commentary: A foundational rule of Stoic physics. If universal transformation is the fundamental law of nature, change cannot be categorized as an evil. Good and evil reside exclusively within the choices of the rational will, while material transformations are completely neutral events.

The River of Time

Greek Original	Latin (Xylander 1558)
<i>Ποταμός τις ἐστὶ τῶν γινομένων καὶ ῥεῦμα βίαιον ὁ αἰὼν· ἅμα τε γὰρ ὥφθη ἕκαστον, καὶ παρενήνεκται καὶ ἄλλο παραφέρεται, τὸ δὲ ἐνεχθήσεται</i>	<i>Aevum, fluctus quidam est rapidus earum quae fiunt rerum: simul enim unum quoddam & apparet & praeterit, & aliud subsequitur, mox item aliud succedet.</i>
English from Greek: Time is a kind of river of things that come to be, a violent stream: no sooner is each thing seen than it has been swept past, and another is being carried by, and that too will be swept along.	English from Latin: Time is a kind of rapid torrent of things that happen: for simultaneously one thing appears and passes by, and another follows, and soon another succeeds it.

Language Differences: The Greek *ποταμός ... καὶ ῥεῦμα βίαιον* (a river and a violent stream) is rendered compactly by Xylander as *fluctus... rapidus* ("a rapid torrent / surging wave").

Commentary: Marcus frames time as a swift, unstoppable current. Physical objects and human lives appear for a fleeting moment before being swept away

by the river of change, emphasizing the total pointlessness of trying to cling to passing material conditions.

Book IV · Section 46

The Familiarity of Events

Greek Original	Latin (Xylander 1558)
<i>Πᾶν τὸ συμβαῖνον οὕτως σύνηθες καὶ γνώριμον ὡς τὸ ρόδον ἐν τῷ ἔαρι καὶ ὀπώρα ἐν τῷ θέρει ἰ τοιοῦτον γὰρ καὶ νόσος καὶ θάνατος καὶ βλασφημία καὶ ἐπιβουλὴ καὶ ὅσα τοὺς μωροὺς εὐφραίνει ἢ λυπεῖ</i>	<i>Omne quod nobis accidit, ita consuetum est & notum, ut rosa vere, fructus aestate. Eadem est ratio morbi, mortis, calumniae, invidiarum, omniumque eorum, quae stultis vel gaudium vel tristitiam afferunt.</i>
English from Greek: Everything that happens is thus customary and familiar, as the rose in spring and the fruit of autumn in summer; for such is also sickness and death and slander and plotting.	English from Latin: Everything that happens to us is as familiar and well-known as the rose in spring, the fruit in summer. The same holds for disease, death, slander, envy, and all the things that bring either joy or sadness to the foolish.

Language Differences: The Greek ἐπιβουλὴ (treachery or structural plotting) is Romanized as *invidiarum* (envious rivalries). Xylander accurately renders τοὺς μωροὺς (fools/the unphilosophical masses) as *stultis*.

Commentary: Marcus looks at suffering through a lens of natural expectation. Betrayal, illness, and mortality are not shocking anomalies; they are as regular and predictable as the blooming of roses in spring. To be astonished by human malice indicates a basic failure to understand how the world operates.

Book IV · Section 47

Rational Succession

Greek Original	Latin (Xylander 1558)
<i>Τὰ ἐξῆς ἀεὶ τοῖς προηγησαμένοις οἰκείως ἐπιγίνεται ὄν γὰρ οἶον καταρίθμησις τίς ἐστὶν ἀπηρημένων καὶ μόνον τὸ κατηναγκασμένον ἔχουσα, ἀλλὰ συνάφεια εὐλογος ἰ καὶ ὡσπερ συντέτακται συνηρμοσμένως τὰ ὄντα, οὕτως τὰ γινόμενα οὐ διαδοχὴν ψιλῆν, ἀλλὰ θαυμαστὴν τινα οἰκειότητα ἐμφαίνει</i>	<i>Quae subsequuntur subinde, ea praecedentibus rite succedunt. Non enim numerus tantum certus est eorum, a sola necessitate dependens: sed & consentanea eorum inter se colligatio, ac quemadmodum certo ordine res inter se sunt coaptata, ita quae fiunt, non successionem nudam, sed mirabilem etiam quandam inter se coniunctionem & necessitudinem ostendunt.</i>

English from Greek: What follows is always related to what went before by an inner kinship. For it is not like a counting-off of separate items, holding together only by necessity, but a rational connection; and as the things that exist have been ordered in harmonious arrangement, so the things that come to be display no bare succession, but a certain wonderful kinship.	English from Latin: What follows always succeeds what has gone before in a proper order. For it is not merely a fixed number of things depending on necessity alone, but a consonant connection among them; and just as things are fitted to one another in a fixed order, so the things that happen display not a bare succession but also a wonderful connection and relationship with one another.
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Language Differences: Marcus contrasts a random sequence with a *συνάφεια εὐλογος* (a logical, rational connection). Xylander accurately renders this as *consentanea eorum inter se colligatio* ("a consonant binding together of things among themselves").

Commentary: History is defined as an interconnected web, not a series of random events. Present occurrences are linked to preceding causes by an intentional, rational connection (θαυμαστήν τινα οἰκειότητα). Seeing this systemic coordination allows an individual to meet unexpected events with composure.

Book IV · Section 48

Elemental Death

Greek Original	Latin (Xylander 1558)
<p>Ἀεὶ τοῦ Ἡρακλειτείου μεμνησθαι, ὅτι γῆς θάνατος ὕδωρ γενέσθαι καὶ ὕδατος θάνατος ἀέρα γενέσθαι καὶ ἀέρος πῦρ καὶ ἔμπαλιν. μεμνησθαι δὲ καὶ τοῦ ἐπιλανθανομένου, ἧ ἡ ὁδὸς ἄγει· καὶ ὅτι, ᾧ μάλιστα διηνεκῶς ὀμιλοῦσι, λόγῳ τῶν τὰ ὅλα διοικοῦντι, τούτῳ διαφέρονται· καὶ οἷς καθ' ἡμέραν ἐγκυροῦσι, ταῦτα αὐτοῖς ξένα φαίνεται· καὶ ὅτι οὐ δεῖ ὥσπερ καθεύδοντας ποιεῖν καὶ λέγειν, καὶ γὰρ καὶ τότε δοκοῦμεν ποιεῖν καὶ λέγειν· καὶ ὅτι οὐ δεῖ <ὡς> παῖδας τοκεῶνων, τουτέστι κατὰ ψιλόν, καθότι παρειλήφμεν. Ὡσπερ εἶ τις σοι θεῶν εἶπεν, ὅτι αὔριον τεθνήξῃ ἢ πάντως γε εἰς τρίτην, οὐκέτ' ἂν παρὰ μέγα ἐποιοῦ τὸ εἰς τρίτην μᾶλλον ἢ αὔριον, εἶ γε μὴ ἐσχάτως ἀγεννῆς εἶ· (πόσον γὰρ ἐστὶ τὸ μεταξύ;) οὕτως καὶ τὸ εἰς πολλοστὸν ἔτος μᾶλλον ἢ αὔριον μηδὲν μέγα εἶναι νόμιζε</p>	<p><i>Dictum Heracliti semper est memoria tenendum: terrae mortem scilicet esse aquam, aquae aerem, aeris ignem, idque vicissim. Eius quoque exemplum recolendum, qui nesciebat quorsum iter duceret. Et quod cum ratione quae universum administrat, continenter consuetudinem habentes, tamen ab ea discrepant: itaque in quae quotidie incidunt, ea nova ipsis & peregrina videntur. Non tanquam si dormiremus, agendum nobis est & loquendum: in somnis enim tantum videmur nobis agere aut dicere. Neque imitandi sunt nobis pueri, qui a parentibus suis, hoc est, nude, sicut accepimus. Quemadmodum si quis tibi Deorum diceret, moriendum tibi aut cras, aut ad diem tertium: non magnopere tertium diem crastino praeferres, nisi animo esses omnino abiectissimi: quantum enim est</i></p>

	<i>intervallum? Eodem modo iudica non in magno esse fovendum discrimine, post millenos ne annos, an vero cras decedas.</i>
<p>English from Greek: Always remember the saying of Heraclitus: the death of earth is to become water, and the death of water to become air, and of air, fire — and back again. Remember too the man who forgot where the road leads; and that men are at variance with the very thing with which they most continually consort — the reason that governs the whole — and that the things they meet every day appear strange to them; and that we must not act and speak like men asleep (for even in sleep we seem to act and speak); and not like children of our parents — that is, not simply as we have received things by tradition. And just as, if a god told you that you would die tomorrow or at latest the day after, you would no longer make it a great matter whether it was the day after rather than tomorrow — unless you were utterly ignoble, for how small is the difference! — so consider it no great matter to die after many years rather than tomorrow.</p>	<p>English from Latin: The saying of Heraclitus must always be kept in memory: that the death of earth is to become water, and the death of water is to become air, and of air to become fire, and conversely. His example must also be recalled, who did not know whither his road led. And that, although they commune continuously with that reason which administers the universe, they nevertheless disagree with it; and those things which they encounter daily appear new and strange to them. We must not act and speak as if we were asleep; for in sleep we only seem to ourselves to act or speak. Nor must we be like children who follow their parents — that is, simply and nakedly accepting things as we have received them. Just as if some god should tell you that you must die tomorrow, or at all events on the third day, you would not greatly prefer the third day to tomorrow, unless you were of an entirely abject mind; for how little is the interval? In the same manner, judge that it is not a great matter to be cherished as a significant difference whether you depart after a thousand years or tomorrow.</p>

Language Differences: *Xylander condenses this section severely, preserving only the opening cosmological quotation of Heraclitus while completely dropping Marcus's subsequent warnings against following unexamined tradition (κατὰ ψιλόν).*

Commentary: Marcus references Heraclitus to ground his views on impermanence. Death is revealed to be nothing more than a standard elemental transformation: the decay of one state of matter is the required birth of the next. By mapping human mortality to this baseline recycling of elements, dying loses its terrifying status.

Book IV · Section 49

Mortality and Proportion

Greek Original	Latin (Xylander 1558)
Ἐννοεῖν συνεχῶς πόσοι μὲν ἰατροὶ	<i>Crebro reputa, quam multi medici sint</i>

<p>ἀποτεθνήκασι, πολλάκις τὰς ὀφρῦς ὑπὲρ τῶν ἀρρώστων συσπᾶσαντες ἵ πόσοι δὲ μαθηματικοί, ἄλλων θανάτους ὡς τι μέγα προειπόντες ἵ πόσοι δὲ φιλόσοφοι, περὶ θανάτου ἢ ἀθανασίας μυρία διατεινάμενοι ἵ πόσοι δὲ ἀριστεῖς, πολλοὺς ἀποκτείναντες ἵ πόσοι δὲ τύραννοι, ἐξουσία ψυχῶν μετὰ δεινοῦ φρυάγματος ὡς ἀθάνατοι κεχρημένοι ἵ πόσαι δὲ πόλεις ὅλαι, ἴν οὕτως εἶπω, τεθνήκασιν, Ἑλίκη καὶ Πομπήιοι καὶ Ἡρκλᾶνον καὶ ἄλλαι ἀναρίθμητοι. ἐπιθι δὲ καὶ ὅσους οἶδας, ἄλλον ἐπ ἄλλῳ ἵ ὁ μὲν τοῦτον κηδεύσας εἶτα ἐξετάθη, ὁ δὲ ἐκεῖνον, πάντα δὲ ἐν βραχεῖ</p>	<p><i>mortui, qui saepenumero aegrotos inspicientes supercilia contraxerint: quot Mathematici, qui aliis exitum e vita praedicendo se iactaverint: quot philosophi, qui de morte & immortalitate multa asseruissent: quot re bellica laudati, qui multos occiderant: quot tyranni, qui magna cum insolentia tanquam immortales potestate sua usi erant: quot urbes mortuae (ut ita dicam) sunt, Helice, Pompeii, Herculaneum, & aliae innumerae.</i></p>
<p>English from Greek: Think continually how many physicians have died, after often knitting their brows over the sick; how many astrologers, after foretelling the deaths of others as if it were some great thing; how many philosophers, after endless argument about death or immortality; how many champions, after killing many; how many tyrants, after wielding their power over lives with terrible arrogance, as if they were immortal; and how many whole cities have, if I may put it so, died — Helike and Pompeii and Herculaneum, and others beyond counting. Run over, too, all those you have known, one after another: this man laid out that one for burial and then was laid out himself; another buried him — and all in a short span.</p>	<p>English from Latin: Constantly reflect how many doctors have died who so often knitted their brows while examining the sick; how many mathematicians/astrologers who prided themselves on predicting others' deaths; how many philosophers who said so much about death and immortality; how many men celebrated in war who had killed many; how many tyrants who used their power with great insolence as if they were immortal; and how many cities have died — if I may use the word — like Helice, Pompeii, Herculaneum, and countless others.</p>

Language Differences: *Xylander tracks Marcus's rhetorical catalog closely. He cuts off the final sentence, omitting the vivid image of the chain of buriers where each person buries another before being laid out themselves (ὁ μὲν τοῦτον κηδεύσας εἶτα ἐξετάθη).*

Commentary: A sharp exercise in perspective. Marcus runs through professions that claimed authority over mortality: doctors who fought it, astrologers who predicted it, and tyrants who dealt it. Death claims them all equally, demonstrating the complete pointlessness of arrogance in a transient world.

The Fleeting Span

Greek Original	Latin (Xylander 1558)
<p>τὸ γὰρ ὅλον, κατιδεῖν ἀεὶ τὰ ἀνθρώπινα ὡς ἐφήμερα καὶ εὐτελεῖ καὶ ἐχθὲς μὲν μυξάριον, αὔριον δὲ τάριχος ἢ τέφρα. τὸ ἀκαριαῖον οὖν τοῦτο τοῦ χρόνου κατὰ φύσιν διελθεῖν καὶ ἴλεων καταλῦσαι, ὡς ἂν εἰ ἐλαία πέπειρος γενομένη ἐπιπτεν, εὐφημοῦσα τὴν ἐνεγκοῦσαν καὶ χάριν εἰδυῖα τῷ φύσαντι δένδρῳ</p>	<p><i>Momentaneum itaque tempus a natura esse constitutum, considerandum est, aequoque animo ex vita abeundum: perinde ac si oliva maturitatem consecuta si decidat, arborem quae ipsam tulit ac genuit, collaudet & gratias agat.</i></p>
<p>English from Greek: The whole of it: to look down always on things human as ephemeral and cheap — yesterday a drop of mucus, tomorrow embalmed flesh or ash. So pass through this hair's-breadth of time in accordance with nature, and be dissolved graciously — as an olive, grown ripe, might fall: praising the earth that bore it, and grateful to the tree that gave it growth.</p>	<p>English from Latin: Therefore one must consider that the time assigned by nature is momentary, and one must depart from life with equanimity — just as an olive, having reached maturity and falling, praises and gives thanks to the tree that bore and nourished it.</p>

Language Differences: Xylander omits Marcus's blunt material description of the human body: ἐχθὲς μὲν μυξάριον, αὔριον δὲ τάριχος ἢ τέφρα ("yesterday a drop of mucus, tomorrow a mummy or ashes"). He focuses entirely on the famous, graceful closing metaphor of the falling olive.

Commentary: Human life is viewed as an ephemeral standpoint. Marcus uses the image of a ripe olive falling naturally from its branch to illustrate peaceful acceptance. Death is handled not with resistance or panic, but with quiet gratitude toward the cosmic tree that generated us.

Book IV · Section 51

The Promontory

Greek Original	Latin (Xylander 1558)
<p>Ὅμοιον εἶναι τῇ ἄκρᾳ, ἣ διηνεκῶς τὰ κύματα προσήσεται ἢ δὲ ἔστηκε καὶ περὶ αὐτὴν κοιμίζεται τὰ φλεγμῆναντα τοῦ ὕδατος. "Ἀτυχῆς ἐγώ, ὅτι τοῦτό μοι συνέβη." οὐμενοῦν ἄλλ' εὐτυχῆς ἐγώ, ὅτι τούτου μοι συμβεβηκότος ἄλυπος διατελῶ, οὔτε ὑπὸ παρόντος θρανόμενος οὔτε ἐπὶ φόβου μένος. συμβῆναι μὲν γὰρ τὸ τοιοῦτο παντὶ ἐδύνατο, ἄλυπος δὲ οὐ πᾶς ἐπὶ τούτῳ ἂν διετέλεσε. διὰ τί</p>	<p><i>Similis esse debes promontorij, ad quod assidue fluctus alliduntur: ipsum autem persistit, utcunque undae aestuantur circum ferantur. Diceret aliquis: infelicem me, cui hoc acciderit: quinimo felicem me, qui hunc casum sine dolore perferam, et nec praesentibus frangar, nec futura extimescam. Nam unicuique tale quod potuit accidere: at non cuiusvis erat, sine dolore eum casum excipere.</i></p>

οὐν ἐκεῖνο μᾶλλον ἀτύχημα ἢ τοῦτο εὐτύχημα; λέγεις δὲ ὅλως ἀτύχημα ἀνθρώπου, ὃ οὐκ ἔστιν ἀπότευγμα τῆς φύσεως τοῦ ἀνθρώπου; ἀπότευγμα δὲ τῆς φύσεως τοῦ ἀνθρώπου εἶναι δοκεῖ σοι, ὃ μὴ παρὰ τὸ βούλημα τῆς φύσεως αὐτοῦ ἔστι; τί οὖν; τὸ βούλημα μεμάθηκας ἢ μήτι οὖν τὸ συμβεβηκὸς τοῦτο κωλύει σε δίκαιον εἶναι, μεγαλόψυχον, σώφρονα, ἔμφρονα, ἀπρόπτωτον, ἀδιάψευστον, αἰδήμονα, ἐλεύθερον, τᾶλλα, ὧν συμπαρόντων ἢ φύσις ἢ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἀπέχει τὰ ἴδια; μέμνησο λοιπὸν ἐπὶ παντὸς τοῦ εἰς λύπην σε προαγομένου τούτῳ χρῆσθαι τῷ δόγματι ὅτι οὐχὶ τοῦτο ἀτύχημα, ἀλλὰ τὸ φέρειν αὐτὸ γενναίως εὐτύχημα. Ἰδιωτικὸν μὲν, ὅμως δὲ ἀνυστικὸν βοήθημα πρὸς θανάτου καταφρόνησιν ἢ ἀναπόλησιν τῶν γλίσχρων ἐνδιατριψάντων τῷ ζῆν. τί οὖν αὐτοῖς πλέον ἢ τοῖς ἀώροις; πάντως πού ποτε κεῖνται, Καϊδικιανός, Φάβιος, Ἰουλιανός, Λέπιδος ἢ εἴ τις τοιοῦτος, οἳ πολλοὺς ἐξήνεγκαν, εἶτα ἐξηνέχθησαν ὅλον, μικρὸν ἔστι τὸ διάστημα καὶ τοῦτο δι' ὅσων καὶ μεθ' οἷων ἐξαντλούμενον καὶ ἐν οἷῳ σωματίῳ; μὴ οὖν ὡς πρᾶγμα .. ἴβλεπε γὰρ ὀπίσω τὸ ἀχανές τοῦ αἰῶνος καὶ τὸ πρόσω ἄλλο ἄπειρον. ἐν δὴ τούτῳ τί διαφέρει ὁ τριήμερος τοῦ τριγενηνίου; Ἐπὶ τὴν σύντομον αἰεὶ τρέχε' σύντομος δὲ ἢ κατὰ φύσιν. ὥστε κατὰ τὸ ὑγιέστατον πᾶν λέγειν καὶ πράσσειν, ἀπαλλάσσει γὰρ ἢ τοιαύτη πρόθεσις κόπων καὶ στρατείας καὶ πάσης οἰκονομίας καὶ κομψείας

Cur igitur illud potius infortunio, quam hoc felicitati adscribis? aut cur id infelicitatem hominis appellas, in quo nihil mali passa est hominis natura? an uero damnum tibi humanae naturae uideri potest id, quod non est contra uoluntatem naturae eius? Quid ergo? Num casus iste efficere poterit, quo minus sis iustus, magnanimus, temperans, prudens, circumspectus, tutus ab errore, uerecundus, liber? aut adimere omnino quicquam eorum, quae hominis naturae sunt propria? Proinde quoties incidit quicquam, quod ad dolorem te provocet, recordare huius praecepti, non illud infortunium esse appellandum, sed felicitati tribuendum, quod id fortiter feras. Est quidem ignobile, praesens tamen ad contemnendam mortem auxilium, memoria repetere eos, qui vitam in longissimum extraxere tempus. Quid enim hi amplius consecuti sunt, quam ij, qui immatura morte sunt abrepti? Vtique ipsi etiam defuncti iacent, Cadicianus, Fabius, Iulianus, Lepidus, alij eorum similes, quum multos extulissent, ipsi deinde elati sunt. Omnino enim exiguum est spacium, idque per quot labores, inter quos, et quali in corpusculo exigendum? Ne igitur mortem pro re difficili accipe. Intuere eius quod retro est aevi vastitate, et eius quod restat, immensam longitudinem: in tanto tempore quid praestat is qui tres aetates, ei qui vixit triduum? Semper brevioriam viam ingredere: brevissima autem est ea, quam natura praescrispsit. Itaque in omni et sermone et actione id sectare, quod est rectissimum. Hoc propositum laboribus, militia, cura rei familiaris, et sollicitudine liberat.

English from Greek: Be like the headland against which the waves break continually: it stands fast, and around it the seething of the water is put to sleep. 'Unlucky am I, that this has happened to me.' Not at all — rather: lucky am I, that though this has happened to me, I continue without sorrow, neither crushed by the present nor fearing what is to come. For such a thing

English from Latin: You ought to be like a promontory against which the waves continuously dash; but it stands firm, and around it the boiling waters are laid to rest. Someone might say: 'Unfortunate am I, because this has happened to me.' Nay, rather, fortunate am I, because though this has happened to me, I continue free from pain, neither broken by the present nor

could have happened to anyone; but not everyone would have continued in it without sorrow. Why, then, is the one thing a misfortune more than the other a good fortune? Do you call that a misfortune of a man at all, which is not a failure of the man's nature? And does that seem to you a failure of a man's nature which is not against the will of his nature? Well then — you have learned that will. Does what has happened prevent you from being just, great-souled, temperate, sensible, deliberate, truthful, self-respecting, free — and all the rest, in whose presence a man's nature has what is its own? Remember, then, at everything that leads you toward sorrow, to use this doctrine: this is not a misfortune — but to bear it nobly is good fortune. A plain man's help, yet an effective one, toward despising death: to run over those who clung tenaciously to life. What more did they gain than those who died early? In any case they lie somewhere at last — Caedicianus, Fabius, Julianus, Lepidus, and any others like them, who carried many to the grave and then were carried out themselves. Small, the whole interval — and drained through what circumstances, with what companions, in what a poor body! Behind you, the gaping abyss of time; before you, another infinity. In this, what difference between the three-day-old child and a Nestor of three generations? Run always on the short road. The short road is the one according to nature: to say and do everything in the soundest way. Such a purpose releases a man from toils and campaigning, from all managing and posturing.

fearing what is to come. For such a thing could have happened to anyone, but it was not within the power of everyone to receive that misfortune without pain. Why then do you assign that to misfortune rather than this to good fortune? Or why do you call that a human misfortune in which human nature has suffered no evil? Or can that truly appear to you to be a loss of human nature which is not contrary to the will of its nature? What then? Will this accident be able to prevent you from being just, great-souled, temperate, prudent, circumspect, safe from error, modest, and free? Or can it take away absolutely anything of those things which are proper to human nature? Therefore, as often as anything happens that provokes you to grief, remember this precept: that this thing is not to be called a misfortune, but is to be attributed to good fortune, because you bear it bravely. It is indeed an ignoble, yet present aid toward despising death, to recall in memory those who prolonged their life to the furthest time. For what more did they attain than those who were snatched away by an untimely death? At all events, they themselves now lie dead — Cadicianus, Fabius, Julianus, Lepidus, and others like them, who, after they had carried out many to burial, were themselves at last carried out. For the space of time is entirely tiny, and through how many labors, among whom, and in what a puny little body must it be spent? Do not, therefore, look upon death as a difficult thing. Gaze backward at the vastness of time gone by, and look forward to the immense length of what remains; in so great an expanse of time, how does he who lived for three generations excel him who lived for three days? Always enter upon the shorter path; and the shortest is that which nature has prescribed. Therefore, in every speech and action pursue that which is most right. This purpose sets one free from labors, warfare, care of domestic affairs, and anxiety.

Language Differences: *Xylander tracks the core heading metaphor closely (Similis esse debes promontorio). As noted, he curtails this section early, leaving out Marcus's detailed review of long-lived Roman citizens and the concluding line about following the natural path.*

Commentary: Marcus models the mind as a solid coastal headland. When external crises hit, the mind is designed to absorb the shock, keeping its internal judgment stable. Misfortune is redefined entirely: an event itself is never a tragedy, but enduring it with dignity is an absolute moral triumph.

Glossary

Greek terms, Stoic vocabulary, and notes on the Roman world

TO MYSELF

The Meditations of Marcus Aurelius

Stuart Schonwetter Edition

Classic Motivation

About this Glossary

Marcus wrote in Greek, not in Latin, and he wrote in the technical Greek of the Stoic schools — vocabulary that had been refined over four centuries by the time he picked it up. A handful of words do most of the work. They are repeated, deliberately, as a craftsman's hands return to the same tools. Translating them flattens out the music. Leaving them un-translated requires a key. This is the key.

After the Stoic vocabulary itself comes a smaller set of entries on the world Marcus moved through: Roman institutions, military phrases, the names of philosophical schools, and a few cultural touchstones that turn up repeatedly in the text. Where a date or name might help the reader place an idea, it is given; where the original Greek word is musical or surprising, it is included in its native characters.

For this parallel edition, each Stoic term below also records how Wilhelm Xylander rendered it in his 1558 Latin translation — the bridge between Marcus's Greek and the Latin column of the facing pages.

Stoic Vocabulary

ἡγεμονικόν (*hēgemonikón*)

The ruling part. Literally the leading or governing thing — the Stoic name for the rational center of the soul, the part of you that judges, assents, and commands. Marcus returns to it constantly. The whole project of his book is keeping this faculty undisturbed and in command of itself. When he tells himself to retreat into his own mind, this is the place he means.

Xylander's Latin: *principatus; also pars princeps, mens gubernatrix (the ruling/governing part).*

λόγος (*lógos*)

A famously elastic word. It means reason, but also speech, account, ratio, principle — the capacity for ordered thought and the order in things that thought tracks. For the Stoics, λόγος is also cosmic: the rational principle that organizes the universe, of which our individual reason is a small participating share. The early Christians, including the author of the Gospel of John, picked the word up partly because the Stoic version of it had already done the philosophical groundwork.

Xylander's Latin: *ratio (reason); rendered oratio / sermo where the sense is speech.*

προαίρεσις (*proaíresis*)

Choice, but in the deepest sense — the part of you that elects, that says yes or no. Aristotle had used the word; Epictetus made it central. Your προαίρεσις is what is genuinely yours and genuinely free: not your body, not your reputation, not your possessions, but the inner act of selection itself. The Stoic claim is that no tyrant can touch this. Whether that is comforting or grim is up to the reader.

Xylander's Latin: *voluntas (will); often expanded as in nostra potestate — “what is in our power.”*

αἰδώς (*aidós*)

Roughly self-respect or shame in a positive sense — the inner check that keeps you from doing something you know to be unworthy. It is one of the older Greek virtues, with a religious dimension. Hesiod listed it among the things that flee the earth at the end of the Iron Age. Marcus uses it for the felt resistance you experience before a base act, the wince that precedes the wrong word.

Xylander's Latin: *verecundia; also pudor (modesty, self-respect).*

οἰκείωσις (*oikeíōsis*)

Affiliation, kinship, recognizing-as-one's-own. A foundational Stoic concept. The school taught that nature plants in every animal, including us, an instinct of self-preservation that gradually expands outward — first to one's own body, then to family, friends, fellow citizens, and finally to all rational beings. The cosmopolitan ethics of the Stoics rest on this idea. To live well is to follow the expansion of οἰκείωσις all the way out, until even the stranger is felt as one's own.

Xylander's Latin: *no single word — rendered by affinitas / cognatio and the verb phrase habere affinitatem (to hold a kinship with).*

φαντασία (*phantasía*)

Impression, appearance, the way something strikes us. Not yet a judgment — just the raw perception. The Stoic discipline begins here: you receive a φαντασία (the man insulted me; the food is delicious; my fever is dangerous), and before you give it your assent, you examine it. Most of Stoic

ethics is the work of taking the φαντασία and refusing to add anything to it that wasn't there in the first place.

Xylander's Latin: *imaginatio; also cogitatio (thought) and visum / visa (what is seen, the impression).*

ὑπόληψις (*hypólēpsis*)

Opinion, supposition, what you take a thing to be. The judgment laid down on top of the φαντασία. "It is not things that disturb us, but our opinions about things" is among the most often-quoted lines in the Meditations, and ὑπόληψις is the word in question. Strike down a faulty ὑπόληψις, Marcus repeats, and the disturbance goes with it.

Xylander's Latin: *opinio; sometimes iudicium (judgment).*

συγκατάθεσις (*synkatáthesis*)

Assent. The act of agreeing with an impression, of saying yes, this is so. The Stoics insisted that we are responsible for our assents in a way we are not responsible for the impressions themselves. The wise person withholds συγκατάθεσις until the impression has been examined — and gives it freely once the impression has passed muster.

Xylander's Latin: *assensio (assent).*

ἀπάθεια (*apátheia*)

Often translated as freedom from passion, which makes it sound colder than it should. ἀπάθεια does not mean freedom from feeling — it means freedom from the pathē, the disturbances and over-readings that derail right action. A Stoic feels grief, fear, joy. What he has trained himself out of is the panic that says the world has just ended because something he wanted didn't happen. Apatheia is closer to composure than to numbness.

Xylander's Latin: *no fixed word — rendered by phrases such as affectibus vacuus / vacuitas perturbationum (free of disordered passions).*

εὐδαιμονία (*eudaimonía*)

Happiness, but in the Greek sense — flourishing, living well, the life that goes well as a whole. Literally good-spirited (from the εὖ- prefix and δαίμων, see below). For the Stoics, eudaimonia is the condition of the rational soul that is in agreement with itself and with nature; it is a state, not a feeling, and it is supposed to be reachable by any rational being who is willing to do the work.

Xylander's Latin: *felicitas* (happiness, good fortune; cf. *felix* for εὖμοιρος).

ἀρετή (*aretḗ*)

Excellence, virtue. The peak performance of any thing relative to its kind: a knife's ἀρετή is to cut, a horse's is to run, a human's is to reason and to act justly. For the Stoics, ἀρετή is the only true good and the only thing required for happiness. Health, money, status — all preferable, all useful, all loseable. Virtue alone, they argued, is what nobody and nothing can take away.

Xylander's Latin: *virtus*.

πρόνοια (*prónoia*)

Providence, foresight. The Stoic universe is governed by an intelligent λόγος, and that intelligence is called πρόνοια when it shows up in the ordering of events. Marcus wavers, in famous passages, between the πρόνοια interpretation ("or atoms?") and the alternative; but his practice is the same in either case — accept what happens as part of the arrangement, whatever the arranger turns out to be.

Xylander's Latin: *providentia*.

φύσις (*phýsis*)

Nature. Both small-n nature (the constitution of any particular thing) and big-N Nature (the cosmos as one ordered, intelligent whole). The Stoic imperative "to live according to nature" means in accord with both at once: the rational structure of the universe and the rational structure of yourself, each in its own register.

Xylander's Latin: *natura*.

κόσμος (*kósmos*)

World, ordered whole, cosmos. The universe seen as a single organized intelligent system. The Greek word originally meant arrangement or adornment — the same root as our cosmetic — and the Stoics chose it deliberately. The world is a beautiful arrangement, not a chaos. To live in agreement with the κόσμος is to recognize that you are inside that arrangement, not above it.

Xylander's Latin: *mundus*; also *universum* (the ordered whole).

δαίμων (*daímōn*)

Spirit, guardian, divine portion within. Long before the Christian word demon turned the term sinister, δαίμων simply meant a divine intermediary,

sometimes the rational principle that each person carries — "the god within." Marcus uses δαίμων for the highest part of his own mind: the part that has, on his account, been put inside him by the gods themselves. To go against your δαίμων is to go against the gift.

Xylander's Latin: *genius (the guardian spirit / divine portion within).*

πνεῦμα (*pneûma*)

Breath, spirit. In ordinary Greek, πνεῦμα is the breath you take. In Stoic physics, it is the active fine substance — a hot tensile breath — that pervades and organizes the cosmos and constitutes the rational soul of every living thing. The word later carried much of the theological weight of the New Testament, but its philosophical career began here.

Xylander's Latin: *spiritus; the diminutive πνευμάτιον becomes spiritulum.*

εἰμαρμένη (*heimarménē*)

Fate. The Stoic doctrine of necessity: the chain of causes by which the world unfolds. εἰμαρμένη is not blind luck and it is not a malevolent will. It is, on the Stoic account, the same thing as the cosmic λόγος seen from the side of inevitability rather than rationality. To consent to εἰμαρμένη is to assent to the order of things; to fight it is to demand that the universe rearrange itself for you, which it will not.

Xylander's Latin: *fatum (destiny, the chain of causes).*

ἀπροπτωσία (*aproptōsía*)

Non-rashness. The technical Stoic virtue of refusing hasty assent — keeping your συγκατάθεσις in reserve until the φαντασία has been examined. It is the discipline of the careful judge: not skepticism, just patience. Most of the bad ethical decisions in the world, on this view, are decisions made before the impression had finished arriving.

Xylander's Latin: *no single word — rendered by phrases for refusing rash assent, e.g. ne temere assentiri (not to assent hastily).*

μεταβολή (*metabolé*)

Change, transformation. The universe for Marcus is ceaseless μεταβολή. Earth becomes water, water becomes air, air becomes fire, then back the other way (the line is from Heraclitus). To fight change is to fight the very condition of being alive. To love change is to love being part of the world rather than a guest in it.

Xylander's Latin: *mutatio (change); the related τροπαί appears as mutationes.*

καθῆκον (*kathêkon*)

Appropriate action; duty in its specific, contextual sense. Cicero translated the word into Latin as *officium*, and that is the route by which the Stoic concept reached the modern Western tradition under the name duty. A καθῆκον is what is fitting for someone in your particular circumstance — a parent's καθῆκον is not a soldier's. Marcus uses the word less often than Epictetus, but his book is, on every page, a working out of his own.

Xylander's Latin: *officium (Cicero's own rendering — appropriate action, duty).*

ἀδιάφορα (*adiáphora*)

Indifferent things. The Stoics divided the world into three categories: virtue (the only good), vice (the only evil), and everything else (the indifferents). Money, health, reputation, even life and death are ἀδιάφορα — preferable or dispreferable but not, properly speaking, good or bad. The category is the source of half the misunderstandings of Stoicism. The Stoics do not say these things don't matter; they say they don't make you good or bad. There is a difference.

Xylander's Latin: *indifferentia; rendered res mediae and res neque bonae neque malae (things neither good nor bad).*

ψυχή (*psyché*)

Soul. For the Stoics, the soul is material — a portion of πνεῦμα, the cosmic breath — but it is the part of us that thinks, feels, and chooses. After death the Stoics differed on whether the soul persisted briefly, scattered immediately, or was reabsorbed at the next cosmic conflagration. Marcus is comfortable not knowing.

Xylander's Latin: *anima; the diminutive ψυχάριον becomes animula.*

ὄρμη (*hormé*)

Impulse, the movement toward action. The Stoic action sequence runs: φαντασία (impression) → συγκατάθεσις (assent) → ὄρμη (impulse) → πράξις (action). The impulse is what carries the agreement into the body. To control your ὄρμη is to keep the engine of action coupled to the steering of judgment.

Xylander's Latin: *impetus; also appetitio / appetitus (the movement toward action).*

The Roman World

Princeps (*first citizen*)

The official self-description of the emperor. Augustus, the first emperor, deliberately avoided the title king and used princeps instead — first among equals, in theory. By Marcus's day the pretense was thin, but the language survived; an emperor who took the language seriously, as Marcus did, treated the senate as a deliberative body and not as decoration. He still held all the power. He just declined to act like it.

Caesar / Augustus (*imperial titles*)

Caesar, originally the family name of Julius Caesar, became a hereditary title for the emperor. Augustus, originally an honorific granted to Octavian by the senate in 27 BCE, became the title of the senior emperor when there was more than one. Marcus and Lucius were both Augusti. The pair of titles eventually outlasted the empire — Caesar surviving in Russian Czar and German Kaiser, Augustus in the month of August, which Marcus and his subjects, every year, simply called August.

Senatus (*the senate*)

By Marcus's time the Roman senate had been, for two centuries, an aristocratic body whose powers were almost entirely advisory. The emperor controlled the army, the treasury, and the law. But a good emperor, on the late-Republican script that Marcus admired, treated the senate with conspicuous respect — attended its sessions, took its votes seriously, called its members friends. Marcus did all of this. It was part of the performance, but it was also, in his case, sincere.

Consul (*chief magistrate*)

Originally the highest elected office of the Roman Republic, held in pairs for one-year terms. By the imperial period the consulship was largely ceremonial, but it remained the great prize of a senatorial career. Marcus's grandfather had been consul three times, which by then required imperial favor as well as merit. The dignity of the title is hard to overstate; the actual job was light.

Stoa Poikile (*the Painted Porch*)

A colonnade in the agora of Athens, decorated with murals by the great fifth-century painter Polygnotus. Zeno of Citium taught his philosophy there

around 300 BCE, and his school took its name from the location: οἱ ἀπὸ τῆς στοᾶς, the men of the Stoa. Five centuries later a Roman emperor, on the Danube frontier, was still working out the implications of what some Athenians had said in front of a wall painting.

Lyceum, Academy (*Aristotle, Plato*)

The two other great philosophical schools of the Greek world. The Academy was Plato's school, founded around 387 BCE; the Lyceum was Aristotle's, founded about a generation later. The names refer to their original neighborhoods in Athens. By Marcus's day both schools had had their late-classical and Hellenistic heydays and were quieter institutions, but both still produced teachers whose work crossed Marcus's desk. Sextus, on his mother's side, was Plutarchian — a member of the late Platonist tradition.

Carnuntum (*Roman frontier city*)

A legionary base on the Danube, in what is now Austria near the Slovakian border, where Marcus spent long stretches of the Marcomannic Wars. Several books of the Meditations are believed, on internal evidence, to have been written there or in nearby camps. The site has been excavated; visitors can still walk among the foundations of the buildings inside which a Roman emperor scribbled to himself in Greek about how not to be angry.

Vindobona (*modern Vienna*)

Another Danube fortress, downriver from Carnuntum. Marcus died there in 180 CE, in winter quarters, probably of plague. The site is now buried under central Vienna; an inscription marks the approximate place of his death, although the scholarship is uncertain. He is one of the few Roman emperors whose final days were not spent in a palace or a battlefield camp but in a working frontier garrison — a fact that suits him.

Antonine Plague (*pandemic*)

An epidemic, almost certainly smallpox, that arrived in Rome with the legions returning from the Parthian war in 165 CE and recurred for the next fifteen years. Modern estimates put its mortality at five to ten percent of the empire's population, with much higher rates in the legions and the cities. The plague defines the second half of Marcus's reign; many of the Meditations passages on death and the sweeping-away of the things human beings care about read very differently against the backdrop of a pandemic

that almost certainly killed Lucius Verus and that Marcus himself probably died of.

Marcomannic Wars (*Danube frontier wars*)

A long, exhausting series of campaigns against Germanic and Sarmatian tribes pressing across the Danube — the Marcomanni, Quadi, Iazyges, and others — that occupied Marcus from about 166 CE until his death. The wars were inconclusive in the harshest sense: Marcus held the line, but the line had to keep being held, year after year, in winter quarters along a frozen river. The famous "Rain Miracle" — a sudden storm that saved a beleaguered legion — comes from this war, and is depicted on the column of Marcus Aurelius that still stands in Rome.

Pater Familias (*head of household*)

The senior male of a Roman household — by law, the holder of *patria potestas*, fatherly power, which extended in theory to life and death over wife, children, and slaves. By Marcus's time the harsher applications of the doctrine were obsolete, but the cultural authority remained. The Roman ideal *pater familias* was firm, fair, hardworking, and slow to anger — a description that doubled, in Marcus's hands, as the description of a good emperor. The household was the model for the state, and the state for the cosmos.

Toga praetexta, toga virilis (*the rites of growing up*)

The toga praetexta, edged with a purple stripe, was worn by senatorial-class boys until around age fifteen, at which point they exchanged it ceremonially for the plain toga virilis — the toga of manhood — and were enrolled as adult citizens. The change of toga was a household event with religious and legal weight. Marcus would have made it around 136 CE, two years before Hadrian's adoption arrangement turned his life over.

A Closing Note

No glossary can carry an author's whole vocabulary; this one is an aid to reading, not a substitute for it. Where a Greek term recurs in the *Meditations* and the reader senses that something is being meant more precisely than the English suggests, look here first. And where a word is missing from this list — there are several — take it as an invitation to look

up the next layer for yourself. Marcus, of all readers, would approve of the habit.